

Captive French girls released

BEIRUT (AP) — Two little French girls held hostage with their mother and five Belgians for over a year were released Monday and flown to Paris, a spokesman for their captors said. Valide Khalid, spokesman for the dissident Palestinian group of Abu Nidal, said the girls — Marie-Laure, 7, and Virginie, 6 — were "on their way to Paris by plane and will arrive there within a few hours." He did not specify the flight they were on. Both their father, Pascal Bette, and their grandmother, Brigitte Valente, had left Beirut earlier in the day aboard a Paris-bound Middle East Airlines plane after spending Christmas in Lebanon. "I ask their (the girls') father to be ready with lots of Christmas gifts to reunite with his daughters," Khalid told the Associated Press. He refused to say where the two girls were released. But there had been widespread speculation that they would be freed either in Libya or Algeria where Abu Nidal's so-called Fatah-Revolutionary Council also has bases. Khalid had said earlier that the girls have been told of their imminent release and that their mother, Jacqueline Valente, no longer objected to this (see page 2).

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AROUND THE WORLD...

EEC sending olive oil to glutted West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The European Economic Community (EEC) is sending Italian olive oil as emergency food aid to Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where there is a huge olive oil surplus. EEC representative Gwyn Morgan confirmed that the oil was part of a package of emergency food aid financed by the 12-nation community's executive commission for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees. Asked why the EEC had sent olive oil, Morgan said: "The European Commission is innocent of deciding what to send. It simply answers requests from UNRWA."

Soviet congress nomination begins

MOSCOW (R) — Nomination of candidates to the new Congress of People's Deputies began Monday as the Soviet Union began preparing for the first nationwide election in which voters will have the novelty of choice. The Soviet news agency TASS said 100 people had already been nominated by the end of the day as candidates for seats in the new parliament, which was approved earlier this month as part of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's political reform programme. The 2,225 members of the congress, the lower chamber of a two-tier legislature, will be chosen March 26 in multi-candidate elections. Elections like this have been tried before on an experimental basis but never in a nationwide poll.

Riots kill 19 in South Indian city

NEW DELHI (R) — Troops were being sent to the South Indian city of Vijayawada Monday night after 19 people died in riots erupted following the murder of a local politician, the Press Trust of India said. It said paramilitary police reinforcements were already patrolling the streets of the city in Andhra Pradesh state to restore order and enforce a 24-hour curfew. At least six people died when police opened fire on crowds rioting after state assembly politician Mohanaranga Rao and two companions were axed to death early Monday, the news agency said. The violence later spread to nearby towns and police said 150 buses had been set on fire and a number of shops and cinemas attacked. The politician, a member of the Congress (I) Party, was attacked in a camp near his home where he had been fasting for four days in protest at alleged police harassment.

Frontline states meet in Lusaka

DAR ES SALAAM (R) — The six frontline states of southern Africa will hold a one-day summit in Lusaka Tuesday, official sources in Tanzania said Monday. Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi would fly to Zambia for the meeting Tuesday morning, sources said. The summit was called by the six states — Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola and Mozambique.

57 arrested, 50 sought in Assiut

ASSIUT, Egypt (AP) — Security forces arrested 57 Muslim fundamentalist students suspected of anti-state activities and are searching for another 50, police sources said Monday. The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the detainees were seized after they distributed leaflets attacking the government. The leaflets singled out President Hosni Mubarak and Interior Minister Zaki Badr, who handles internal security. The detainees brought to about 300 the number of alleged Muslim extremists, mostly students at Assiut University, rounded up during the past month, the sources said. They said the leaflets demanded the release of students detained earlier.

Iran plans for council elections

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran's first council elections to select more than 300,000 representatives could be held by this spring pending approval of a plan submitted by the Interior Ministry, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported Monday. The agency quoted Hussein Malek Ahmadi, the Interior Ministry's director for social affairs, as saying that "the Interior Ministry has the means to hold the elections early next year (starting March 1989), and we have a firm intention to carry it out, but we are awaiting final approval of the plan." The ministry was hoping for a date between April 21 to May 21, IRNA reported Ahmadi as saying (Iran spells out laws for parties, page 2).

Turkish police hold 9 in killing of diplomat

ANKARA (R) — Turkish police investigating the killing of a Portuguese diplomat have detained nine people and uncovered several important clues, a regional prosecutor said Monday. The body of Second Secretary Sergio Manuel Pinto Moutinho, a 39-year-old bachelor, was found beside his car near the southern town of Tarsus last Friday. He had been stabbed 18 times in the face, neck and torso. "We have detained nine people for questioning. We have important clues," Tarsus Prosecutor Galip Topcuoglu told the Anatolian news agency. An official said Saturday that the killing was unlikely to have been politically inspired and police were treating it as a criminal incident.

Britain urges Afghan rulers to step down

LONDON (R) — British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe urged Afghanistan's government Tuesday to step down as soon as possible in order to avoid more bloodshed. He made the call in a message marking the 10th anniversary of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, which touched off a civil war with guerrillas opposed to the Moscow-backed Kabul government. Howe said all the parties should show restraint. This was a time to heal wounds, not to settle old scores. "The transition from the present unrepresentative regime in Kabul to a government established by a genuine act of self-determination will not be easy," he said. "It still more bloodshed is to be avoided, the regime must step down of its own accord — the sooner the better. But it is also important that all parties including the resistance exercise wisdom and restraint," Howe added.

Intellectuals call for Cuban plebiscite

MADRID (R) — More than 100 intellectuals and entertainers urged President Fidel Castro Tuesday to follow the example of Chile and let Cubans decide in a plebiscite whether he should stay in power. They signed an open letter to Castro which was drafted by Cuban exiles and made available to news organisations in Madrid before publication as an advertisement in newspapers in several countries. They said Castro should call elections if Cubans voted "No" in an internationally-supervised ballot. He will mark his 30th year in power Jan. 1.

Israel says 3 commandos killed

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli paratroopers killed three commandos Monday in a clash north of the Israeli-Lebanese border, the army and Israeli armed forces radio said. An Israeli patrol spotted the squad during the night in the area of Meiss Al Jabal village, several metres north of the border, and opened fire, killing the three, the army command said in a statement. It said that soldiers found Kalashnikov rifles, ammunition, anti-tank rocket launchers, leaflets and other equipment near the bodies.



His Majesty King Hussein Monday confers with Saudi Minister of Haj Sheikh Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasi'e (centre) in a meeting attended by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat (Petra photo)

Qasem confers with senior Iraqi official

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem met at his office Monday with the first under-secretary of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Wisam Al Bahawi and discussed issues of concern to Jordan and Iraq.

Other questions tackled at the meeting, which was held in the presence of Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Ghafel Jassem Hussein, included extraordinary session of the Arab League Council in Tunis next month and a number of world issues and an international conference on the use of chemical weapons to be held in Paris.

PLO takes step towards government-in-exile

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has set up a legal committee to decide what form a Palestinian government-in-exile should take, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said Monday.

The agency said the PLO Executive Committee, at the end of a three-day meeting in Baghdad attended by Chairman Yasser Arafat, gave the legal committee 10 days to complete its report.

The idea of a provisional government gained momentum last month when the Palestine National Council (PNC) declared an independent Palestinian state.

The PLO has not clearly defined the borders of the state, which has been recognised by more than 70 countries.

The PLO's chief representative in Baghdad, Azzam Al Ahmad, told Reuters earlier the PLO Executive Committee had reviewed efforts to convene an Arab summit and studied ways of boosting support for the Palestinian uprising.

The INA quoted Palestinian sources as saying the committee

also decided to change the status of its offices in states which recognised the Palestinian state to embassies.

Arafat Saturday briefed PLO officials on his diplomatic drive to win recognition for the state and on plans for a government-in-exile.

The officials also discussed the talks this month in Tunis between the PLO and United States. Washington ended a 13-year ban on contacts with the group after Arafat renounced "terrorism" and said he recognised Israel's right to exist.

Baghdad Radio said Arafat and committee members met Iraqi President Saddam Hussein Monday. He reiterated his support for the Palestinian struggle and the year-old uprising.

Ahmad said Arafat would lay a foundation stone for a Palestine embassy building in Baghdad Tuesday at a ceremony to be attended by high-ranking Iraqi officials.

Iraq agreed to pay for the 3,200 square metre building as part of its support for the Palestinian

King phones Iraqi leader

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday telephoned Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and exchanged views with him on the latest developments in the region.

The King's phone call came within the framework of continued consultation and coordination between the two leaders.

Israel claims contacts under way for Mubarak visit

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel and Egypt are holding intensive contacts to arrange a possible visit here by President Hosni Mubarak, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Monday.

Preparations got under way as Shamir worked on a Middle East peace initiative based on the Camp David accords with Egypt (see page 2).

Egyptian Foreign Ministry officials said in Cairo they were unaware of contacts on a possible Mubarak visit.

Another Shamir aide said Monday Shamir may ask the United States and Soviet Union to sponsor talks for a Middle East settlement as part of his new peace initiative.

Shamir, however, would condition such a proposal on Moscow renewing diplomatic ties with Israel which were broken during

the 1967 war, his spokesman Yossi Ahmeir said in a telephone interview.

Twice during weekend interviews, Mubarak has said he is willing to go to Israel if the trip would help bring peace to the Middle East.

However, he told the Tokyo newspaper Yomiuri Sunday that he would go only if Israel extended the invitation without preconditions.

In responding to Mubarak's initial offer, made through an interview with the Kuwait newspaper Al Anbaa, Shamir said he would welcome a visit.

But he indicated that he wants to work with Egypt towards providing "autonomy" to Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip based on the Camp David accords.

In many public statements in recent months, Mubarak rejected that as a basis for talks. Egypt considers the 1978 Camp David accords to have lapsed because Israel failed to honour them and because they now have been superseded by other initiatives for a Palestinian settlement.

Mubarak would be the first Arab leader to visit Israel since the last trip made by the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in September 1979.

Shamir has said he would welcome a Mubarak visit.

"He would like to renew the link with Mubarak," Ahmeir said, adding that the timing seemed right since Shamir, as leader of the right-wing Likud bloc, took office for a second

(Continued on page 2)

Arab League backs Libya in U.S. row

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Arab League Council expressed solidarity with Libya Monday and said any U.S. attack on an alleged chemical weapons plant there would seriously harm Arab-American relations.

At the end of a one-day meeting called by Libya after President Reagan hinted an attack might be under discussion, the council of permanent representatives said.

"The council affirms its total solidarity with Libya and warns against any temptation to unleash an aggression against this state, which would risk having the most serious repercussions on the region and on Arab-American relations."

Libya has denied having any chemical weapons and says the factory at Rabta will produce medicine when it opens in two or three months.

Reagan said last week that Washington was consulting its allies on how to stop Libya pro-

ducing poison gas at the plant. He did not rule out a preemptive attack.

The council considers the American threats as a factor of tension likely to jeopardise the international climate of détente and peace which the Arab states are keen to support and strengthen," the Arab League statement said.

Disputes between states, especially military ones, should be submitted to international organisations such as the United Nations or the International Atomic Energy Agency, it added.

The 21-member league also accused Israel of introducing chemical and other banned weapons into the Middle East and said the United States had turned a blind eye to this.

Arab League Secretary General Chadli Klibi, opening the special session, accused the Americans of violating the U.N. Charter and international law in threatening to attack Libya.

(Continued on page 2)

16 held in Sudan coup plot

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sixteen military men and civilians arrested in connection with an aborted coup attempt had planned political assassinations and a takeover of the armed forces general command Dec. 8, a military source said Monday. The Sudan News Agency quoted a source at the army's general command as saying that the alleged plotters, who were loyal to former President Jaafar Numeiri, had a two-part plan ready for the takeover Dec. 8. A group of them was supposed to assassinate a number of political leaders, including Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi, while another group was to occupy vital and strategic departments such as the army general command and the radio station. He did not say if there were others involved in the plot, but said that those arrested were still being interrogated. No charges have yet been filed. The military source said that on Dec. 7, alleged ringleader, Lt. Col. Hassan Mohamed Ahmad Nasser, told his associates that Dec. 8 was the zero hour, but that they faced a problem in securing fuel supply for their vehicles. Gasoline is rationed in Sudan, and car owners have to queue for several hours to get their weekly supply.

King, Saudi minister review cooperation in religious affairs

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday received Saudi Minister of Haj and Awqaf Sheikh Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasi'e and reviewed with him bilateral cooperation in various fields, particularly awqaf, pilgrimage, preaching and guidance affairs.

At the audience, attended by Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat, King Hussein listened to a briefing on an Islamic awqaf ministers conference due to be held in Saudi Arabia in the next two months and the subjects to be discussed at the conference.

Sheikh Abdul Wasi'e conveyed to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and those of Saudi Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz.

Also Monday, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan received Sheikh Abdul Wasi'e, who conveyed to him the greetings of the Saudi crown prince.

Prince Hassan and Sheikh Abdul Wasi'e reviewed bilateral cooperation in various fields.

Earlier Monday, the Saudi minister visited the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Royal Scientific Society (RSS).

Accompanied by an official delegation and Khayyat, the Saudi guest was briefed on the two

institutions' programmes in promoting national development in the Kingdom.

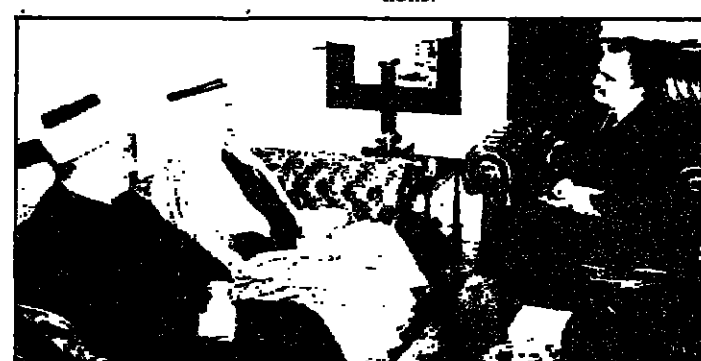
RSS President Jawad Al Anani presented a briefing on solar energy programmes and research being conducted by RSS departments.

Prime Minister Zaid Rifai held talks with the Saudi minister Sun-

day in a meeting attended by Khayyat. Discussions dealt with bilateral cooperation in religious affairs and matters related to Islamic preaching and guidance.

In a separate meeting, Khayyat briefed the Saudi minister on plans to organise this year's Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs' programmes to restore mosques and the tombs of the Prophet Mohammad's companions.

Khayyat thanked Saudi Arabia for its care for Jordanian pilgrims in Mecca and Medina and later accompanied the Saudi minister and his accompanying delegation to a number of Islamic institutions.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Monday confers with Saudi Minister of Haj Sheikh Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasi'e in a meeting attended by Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat (Petra photo)

Israel to make possession of 'PLO money' a crime

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli attorney general Yosef Harish is drafting a law to make possession of money originating from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) a crime, his spokesman said Monday.

The law, prompted by new Foreign Minister Moshe Arens — previously the Arab affairs minister — would outlaw possessing money from "terror organisations" and forbid third party donations that originate with such groups.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Harish as saying the law would put the burden of proof on the holders of the funds rather than on the prosecution. Spokeswoman Etti Eshed could not confirm this.

"Until now if the PLO wanted to give something they would do it via a charity organisation who would then give it as a gift," Eshed said.

"If it is proven (that money came from the PLO), Israel will actually be able to seize the money and put on trial those who

are holding it."

Israel has taken strict measures to prevent PLO money from reaching Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in the wake of the year-long uprising.

On Sunday, Israeli troops shot dead a Palestinian and wounded 16 as a protester injured by soldiers earlier this month died in hospital.

A soldier opened fire in the Gaza Strip's Jabalya refugee camp, killing 17-year-old Raed Edmada, after being attacked at close range by stone-throwing protesters.

Hospital officials said Mohammad Nasser Jamal Hawash, aged 22, died Sunday after being shot in the head in Nablus Dec. 16. His death raised to eight the number of Palestinians fatally shot in Nablus that day.

The death of a Nablus resident wounded earlier by the army also added to tension in the city, the largest in the West Bank, the spokesman said.

Christmas celebrations in Beth-

lehem were markedly subdued because of the Palestinian uprising.

In Manger Square in Bethlehem, where the Bible says Jesus was born, few souvenir shops were open and only several coloured light bulbs hung from the Christmas tree.

Police and soldiers inspected incoming cars for security, and only a handful of shopkeepers opened souvenir stores facing Manger Square.

As pilgrims chanted mass in the Church of Nativity off the Square, about 50 soldiers chased a group of stone-throwing protesters outside. The protesters shouted "with blood and soul we will redeem the martyrs," news reports said.

Muslim fundamentalists of the Hamas or zeal movement published a leaflet Sunday calling for a day of "confrontation" with Israel, to mark the 41st anniversary since the founding of an armed Palestinian resistance

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Structural damage theory in focus in Pan Am crash

LOCKERBIE, Scotland (AP) — Investigators have found no evidence Pan Am Flight 103 crashed accidentally, but the possibility is still being "actively investigated," the chief investigator said Monday.

Mick Charles, head of a team of 40 U.S. and British investigators at the site of last Wednesday's crash of the Boeing 747 Jumbo jet, said some pieces of wreckage and a suitcase were being sent to a military research centre for examination.

Charles had said Friday that investigators had found "no evidence whatsoever yet of sabotage" in the crash into this picturesque town in southwest Scotland.

A statement from Charles was issued Monday by the British Department of Transport as the search for victims spread over a broad area and police said one man had been arrested during an investigation of reports that looters were robbing the bodies and wreckage (see page 8).

Strong suspicions the plane was sabotaged built swiftly after a claim of responsibility by a pro-Iranian group, the revelation that the U.S. government had been

warned of a threat against a Pan Am flight from Frankfurt to New York, and the sudden breakup of the plane at 9,400 metres. Flight 103 started in Frankfurt and changed aircraft in London.

Charles' brief statement Monday said: "Although, because of the fragmented and scattered nature of the wreckage, the investigation of the structural aspect of the accident is a slow process, no evidence of a structural failure has been found."

"However the possibility of such a failure is still being actively investigated," he said.

"Some pieces of wreckage and a suitcase are today being taken to the Royal Armament Research and Development Establishment at Fort Halstead for more detailed examination to determine whether they exhibit evidence of a pre-impact explosion."

The Ministry of Defence said the Fort Halstead centre, near Biggin hill in Kent, does research and development on armour and explosives.

Earlier Monday, the Times of London quoted William Trench, Britain's former chief inspector of air accidents and now a consultant on aircraft accidents to the

Defence Ministry and the European Economic Community, as saying he thought the crash was caused by structural failure, though he was keeping his options open.

Trench said the jet's left wing had not been found, meaning it could have fallen into the sea after being knocked off by the nose tearing away. High winds at the time of Wednesday night's crash could then have blown the wing into the sea, which is only 16 kilometres south of Lockerbie.

"If the wing had broken off at the root, the disruption of the electrical system would have been substantial, possibly precluding the sending of a mayday (distress) call," Trench was quoted as saying.

"If the wing is missing, this raises the question of whether there was a structural failure resulting from over-stressing in extreme weather conditions, which were in the area at the time," the Times quoted Trench as saying.

Flight 103 vanished without sending a distress call. Investigators have been analysing a faint noise at the end of the cockpit tape-recording of the crash.

Relatives leave Lebanon with tape, no captives

BEIRUT (R) — The relatives of two French girls held hostage in Lebanon left Monday saying they still hoped for the quick release of the children, whose freedom was promised as a Christmas gift.

"I am very optimistic. I think the release will be in the next few days. I firmly believe that," Pascal Bettele, the girls' father, told Reuters before leaving west Beirut.

Bettele's ex-wife Jacqueline Valente and their daughters Marie-Laure and Virginie were seized with five Belgians by Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) fighters aboard the yacht Silco.

The FRC, led by Abu Nidal, said in November 1987 that it had captured the eight off the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and they were Jewish Israeli spies. Their relatives insist they are Roman Catholics.

Bettele, Valente's brother-in-law Andre Metral and mother Brigitte, came to Beirut to spend Christmas as near as possible to the hostages. They brought teddy bears and other toys for the girls.

Bettele said Virginie was six years old and Marie-Laure seven. The FRC had said the girls were aged eight and six respectively.

The relatives met FRC official Walid Khaled Sunday at a Palestinian camp in west Beirut. He assured them the girls would soon be released after being taken to a safe place outside Lebanon.

Khaled said the decision to free them was a Christmas gesture prompted by an appeal made by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. He would not say whether they would be released in Libya.

The FRC also presented videotapes of Valente and the five Belgians sending Christmas greetings to families and friends.

Valente, who said she was pregnant but well-treated, is held with her boyfriend Fernand Houckens, father of the unborn baby and a year-old girl born in captivity and nicknamed "Liberte".

The others are Fernand's brother Emmanuel. Emmanuel's wife Godelieve and their teenage children Laurent and Valerie.

Asked if he was disappointed at leaving Lebanon with a video tape instead of his daughters, Bettele said: "I am also leaving with a confirmation of their release."

"I hope that the others will be released and that Jacqueline will have a safe delivery," he added.

Bettele said he was given legal custody of the girls, who were taken away by their mother in 1985. He did not know where they were until reading about the capture of the Silco in the press, he added.

The FRC said in November it would set the girls free, but Valente later said on tape that she wanted them with her. In the latest videotape, she said she would not return to France after her release.

Shamir to unveil 'peace plan' based on Camp David accords

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir will soon give details of a Middle East peace initiative based on the 1978 Camp David accords with Egypt, his chief spokesman Avi Pazner said Monday.

Pazner told Reuters: "It is not in the form of a plan, it is a set of ideas which he will reveal in the next few weeks. The ideas he is working on are based on Camp David."

Shamir announced on Israeli Television's Arabic service Sunday that he would disclose his peace proposals in the coming weeks.

Pazner said Shamir would give details of the initiative before a Washington visit early in February to meet George Bush, who will be installed as U.S. president by then.

The director-general of the prime minister's office, Yossi Ben-Aharon, told the evening newspaper Maariv that Shamir's initiative would include a timetable for a period of Palestinian "autonomy" in the occupied territories.

He said it envisaged a process of gradual change in the territories until the determination of their final status.

The Camp David accords provide for limited "self-rule" for the 1.75 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, with elections for an "administrative" council.

The final status of the areas were to be negotiated within five years of "autonomy" but talks have never taken place.

Pazner said Shamir favoured elections to choose Palestinian representatives for negotiations but only after an "autonomy" programme was established.

Diplomats said any Shamir plan would call for peace talks under the superpowers' supervision, attended by Egypt, Jordan and Palestinian representatives not from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Israel rejects a U.N.-sponsored international peace conference.

Diplomats noted that elections in the occupied territories would require at least the tacit approval of the PLO otherwise they would be boycotted by Palestinians.

Egypt has said the Camp David provisions for the Palestinians have been overtaken by events but Saturday President Hosni Mubarak said he would visit Israel if this would help achieve lasting peace.

Israel rejects talks with the PLO in spite of the United States' resumption of contacts with the group this month after a 13-year break.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

PLO takes step towards government-in-exile

(Continued from page 1)

Mustafa Al Zibri, deputy leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — did not attend the meetings.

Zibri has been sharply critical of Arafat's peace initiative.

The PLO will demand a corridor connecting the West Bank with the Gaza Strip as one of its conditions if negotiations with Israel over the occupied territories get started, a West German magazine said this weekend.

The Hamburg-based Spiegel magazine, in an interview with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, also said the Palestinians would continue to insist that Jerusalem be part of an independent state.

In the Spiegel interview, Arafat was asked if he would insist on sticking to U.N. resolution 181, which delineates borders for Israel and Palestine, including areas that the Israelis have occupied for 40 years.

"We can negotiate over that in the peace conference," Arafat was quoted by the magazine as saying.

"But in all cases we will insist on establishing a corridor between West Jordan and the Gaza Strip. It is not acceptable for us to establish a state split into two parts," Spiegel quoted Arafat as saying.

West Jordan is the term often used in German language when referring to the West Bank.

"Let's get the negotiations started first, then each can lay their conditions on the table," the magazine quoted Arafat as saying.

Spiegel also quoted the PLO leader as saying he was willing to negotiate "on equal terms."

In the interview, Arafat also insisted that the Arab Jerusalem must be the Palestine capital.

"We demand our Arab Jerusalem, not more and not less," Arafat was quoted as saying.

Israel claims contacts

(Continued from page 1)

straight term last Thursday.

"This is a good time. The Arabs now have the feeling that Shamir represents Israel and that if they want ties with us, the address is Yitzhak Shamir," Ahmeir said.

Israel's ambassador in Cairo, Shimon Shamir, was holding meeting with Egyptian officials to determine whether a Mubarak visit was possible, said another Shamir spokesman, Avi Pazner.

Thomas Pickering, the outgoing U.S. ambassador to Israel, told reporters in Tel Aviv he would welcome such a summit.

"It... is certainly something the U.S. would encourage and welcome," Pickering said.

Mubarak offered to visit Israel in reply to a question by "Al Anbaa whether he would go 'if that would resolve the whole Palestinian issue'."

"Why not go?" Mubarak replied. "If this visit would lead to solving the problem, and if it would lead to establishing a just peace, then I am ready."

OIC rallies behind Libya against U.S. threat

NICOSIA (Agencies) — The Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) has urged the United States not to attack a factory in Libya which Washington claims is about to start producing chemical weapons.

Sharifuddin Pirzada, secretary-general of the Jeddah-based OIC, said in a statement the United States should refrain from carrying out such attack "in view of the Libyan denial."

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has said that the plant at Rabta near Tripoli is not a chemical weapons factory but produces medicines.

President Reagan told reporters last week no decision had been taken on whether to bomb the plant, but he said Washington was in contact with its allies on how to stop Libya making "poison" gas there.

Pirzada said in his statement, carried by the Saudi Press Agency late Sunday: "Islamic countries support Libya according to OIC resolutions."

Arab League representatives were due to meet in Tunis Monday to discuss Libya's complaint that the United States had threatened to attack the factory.

A Libyan foreign affairs official told the United Arab Emirates newspaper Al Khaleej that the factory at Rabta would open soon and the foreign press would be invited to the ceremony.

"The Reagan administration should enter a dialogue with Libya instead of making threats," said the official, Ali Al Hadeiri. "Libya condemns terrorism in all its forms."

U.S. planes bombed Libya in 1986 after Reagan said it was involved in an attack which killed two U.S. soldiers in a Berlin bar. Libya denied involvement.

Syria, Iraq and Iran have all pledged to support Libya against the threatened U.S. military action.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hosseyn Sheikholeslam summoned Libya's top diplomat in Tehran to inform him of his government's "firm stand in the face of America's threats and propaganda attacks," Tehran Radio said Sunday in a report monitored in Nicosia.

"We shall do whatever we can in support of Libya," it quoted him as saying.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said that Iraq agreed to participate in the extraordinary session of the Arab League in Tunis called by its secretary-general, Chadli Klibi.

Libya asked for the meeting after Reagan made his statement, it said.

"By shouting these threats against the Libyan people the American administration is trying to impose the logic of terrorism and aggression in solving bilateral and international issues," the daily Al Jomhouriya said in an editorial.

The paper urged the U.S. to discuss the issue with Libya.

In Syria, the official news agency quoted an unidentified government official as saying, "Syria expresses its deep concern and strong denunciation as to this unjustified campaign against Libya."

Sudan rebels say war will continue

ADDIS ABABA (R) — Sudanese rebels said Monday the country's five-year-old civil war would go on after Khartoum rejected a peace plan the rebels promoted.

The Sudanese parliament last week turned down a tentative peace accord negotiated by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), part of Sudan's ruling coalition, in November.

It endorsed instead a loose set of peace proposals put forward by Sudanese Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi.

"The parliamentary decision is most unfortunate because it means there will be no peace in the Sudan. It means we have no option but to continue fighting," an SPLA spokesman told Reuters.

However, he said the SPLA would meet two DUP leaders expected to fly to the Ethiopian capital Monday to brief rebel leaders on the latest situation in Khartoum.

The SPLA-DUP peace plan provided for a ceasefire in the civil war, a freeze on new Islamic laws, a lifting of the state of emergency, the cancellation of Sudan's military pacts with foreign countries and the convening of a constitutional conference.

However, one party in the ruling coalition, the national Islamic front, objected to the proposed freeze on introducing Islamic law.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat, Mauritanian president meet in Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — Visiting Mauritanian President Mohammad Maouya Ould Sid'Ahmad Taya discussed support for the Palestinian uprising with Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat Sunday, the Iraqi News Agency INA said. It said Taya later left Baghdad after a 24-hour visit during which he also met President Saddam Hussein.

Quadruplets born in Assiut

ASSIUT, Egypt (AP) — A mother of two, gave birth Sunday to four babies, two girls and two boys. All are in good health, doctors at a maternity hospital in this southern Egyptian city said. The 30-year-old Nagah Thabet was also reported in sound health. Assiut is 380 kilometres south of Cairo.

Kuwait declares New Year holidays

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait has declared Dec. 31 and Jan. 1 public holidays to mark the New Year, the Kuwait News Agency said. Banks and government offices will be closed, it said.

Rebels list 700 prisoners executed in Iran

BAGHDAD (R) — The main Iranian opposition group, the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, Monday named 700 political prisoners it said had been executed by Iran over the past four months. In a statement teleaxed to Reuters, the Baghdad-based group said the list gave names of some of the 12,000 of its supporters and other political prisoners executed since the U.N.-brokered ceasefire between Iran and Iraq went into operation last August 20. The group, which said it had sent the names to the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other world bodies, repeated its demand that Iran be expelled from the United Nations. Earlier this month, the speaker of the Iranian parliament, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said Iran respected human rights and that defending them was a holy duty. The Mujahadeen-e-Khalq has several times accused Iran of executing thousands of its supporters and other people. Rafsanjani said Dec. 7 that opposition members captured during a thrust by the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq's National Liberation Army in July were rightly punished for having attacked Iran's sovereignty and territory.

Khamenei meets Lebanese cleric

NICOSIA (AP) — President Ali Khamenei warned Lebanese combatants against intercommunal fighting Sunday, saying they should unify their ranks against the United States and Israel, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported. "The Lebanese have a common enemy and should consolidate their ranks against imperialism, Zionism and their mercenaries by strengthening the Islamic aspects they share," said Khamenei, according to the IRNA report monitored in Cyprus. The agency said the Iranian president made his remarks after a meeting with the acting chairman of the Lebanese Higher Supreme Shi'ite Council, Sheikh Mohammad Mehdi Shamseddine, who has been on a visit to Iran since early December. Shamseddine, who arrived in Tehran right after a bloody round of fighting between Lebanon's two main militias, briefed Khamenei on the latest developments in Lebanon, especially on the Islamic level, said IRNA.



Despite stepped-up efforts by the Kabul government and the Soviet Union to end the conflict in Afghanistan, rebels are engaged in running battles with government forces in several parts of the country.

Kabul finds useful role for ex-king in ending conflict

ISLAMABAD (Agencies) — Feb. 15.

Kabul Radio said the two men discussed "ceasing armed operations; improving political situation and forming a strong government in Afghanistan."

Rebel sources in Peshawar, northwest Pakistan, quoted guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as saying the Soviets were "at their wit's end" over Afghanistan and accused them of trying "to widen the gap of disunion among the Afghan Islamic alliance."

Hekmatyar heads one of seven rebel parties forming the main rebel alliance based in Pakistan. Alliance chairman Burhanuddin Rabbani visited Tehran at the weekend for talks with an eight-party guerrilla alliance based in Iran.

Zahir Shah, 74, has lived in Rome since he was overthrown in a 1973 coup by his cousin Mohammad Daoud, who was toppled and killed in a 1978 takeover.

Vorontsov met the Pakistan-based rebels for talks in Saudi Arabia Dec. 3 and 4. He said he planned to meet Iran-based rebels by the end of the year.

Rabbani in Iran

Iranian President Ali Khamenei met Sunday with Rabbani, the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported.

Khamenei expressed the hope that the Mujahadeen would succeed in establishing an Islamic government in Afghanistan.

Also Sunday, Mohammad Javad Larjani, deputy foreign minister, expressed support for the talks between the Soviet Union and the Mujahadeen.

IRNA also said that the Afghan refugees in Iran would stage a rally Tuesday to mark the 9th anniversary of the Soviet military intervention.

Earlier Iranian press reports quoted Rabbani as saying that he was in Tehran to consult with the alliance based in Iran in order to determine the future of Afghanistan after the Soviet troop withdrawal.

Iran spells out strict laws governing political parties

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iran has spelled out the laws governing the conduct of political parties which will be allowed to operate from the end of the year.

The political director of the Interior Ministry, Abdol Hamid Imami, was quoted by the Tehran daily Etemad at Sunday as saying applications for registration could be made from Dec. 31.

Parties should provide details of their views on political, economic and social issues and spell out how they intended to achieve their aims, Imami said.

Applications would be studied by a special commission which would give its ruling within three months.

Imami, whose remarks were quoted by the Iranian news agency IRNA, said people barred from politics included all ex-members of Savak, the dreaded secret service of the late Shah.

Also banned were former cabinet ministers of the Shah, who was deposed in the 1979 Islamic revolution, members of the pre-revolutionary parliament, and freemasons.

He said parties should have no dealings with foreign powers which jeopardised Iranian interests and would not be allowed to receive funds from abroad.

They should not spread rumours, try to create tension, break Islamic rules or conceal arms, Imami said.

Interior Minister Ali Akbar Mohtashemi announced nine days ago that political parties would be allowed now that a ceasefire had been declared in the war with Iraq.

He said political parties have never enjoyed a good reputation and warned all organisations to learn from the bitter past of such groups and abide by Islamic and Iranian values.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

1990.5M10.3	19:30	News in Hebrew	028543	Jordan Valley	8 / 10	IRBID:	Telephone Information	Al-Munshir Hospital	6672279	Banana (Mukammar)	300 / 250
JORDAN TELEVISION	20:00	News in Arabic	Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	Desert	1 / 10	Dr. Hamzeh Anasreh (—)	(directory assistance)	The Islamic, Abadai	66612703	Beans	440 / 400
Tel. 77111-19	20:30	Who's the Boss	Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	Aqaba	9 / 17	Al Sharara pharmacy 985238	Overseas Calls	Al-Abil, Abadai	661044	Broad beans	630 / 500
	21:10	Specials	St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751			ZARQA:	Central Amman Telephone	Italian, Al-Muhajreh	7771013	Cabbage	130 / 100
	22:00	News in English	Amman International Church Tel. 683326	Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 9, Aqaba 16, Humidity range: Amman 80 per cent, Aqaba 48 per cent.		Dr. Nash'at Amari (—)	Repairs	Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	77511216	Carrots	250 / 200
	22:20	Addicty	Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811285			Khalifah pharmacy 985417	Abdali Telephone Repairs	Army, Marka	88161115	Cauliflower	200 / 150
PROGRAMME ONE			Rainbow Congregation Tel. 822605				Jordan Television	Queen Alia Hospital	60224005	Cucumbers	340 / 250
15:30		Korea	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 818817, 821264				Radio Jordan	Amal Hospital	574155	Dates	200 / 150
15:50		Programme review					Water Authority	ZARQA:		Eggplant (large)	80 / 50
16:00		Children programmes					Jordan Electricity Authority	Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)98332	Eggplant (small)	200 / 150
17:15	05:07	Flying Doctors					Electric Power	Zarqa National Hospital	(09)991071	Garlic	250 / 200
18:00	06:20	News summary in Arabic					Company	RI Flight Information	(09)986752	Grapefruit	160 / 120
18:05	11:37	Programme on world news					Queen Alia Intl. Airport				
18:20	14:21	Religious programme						IRBID:			
18:50	16:44	Programme on Environment						Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555	Lemon	220 / 180
19:10	18:06	Agricultural programme						Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272725	Marrow (large)	90 / 60
19:45	18:06	Programme review						Ben Al Nafies Hospital	(02)247100	Marrow (small)	180 / 140
20:00		News in Arabic						AQABA:		Orange (French)	300 / 220
20:40		Arabic series						Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111	Orange (Shamouni)	280 / 220
21:30		Programme review								Orange (local)	230 / 180
21:40		Local programme								Onion (dry)	300 / 160
22:30		Local series								Pepper (hot)	300 / 160
23:00		News summary in Arabic								Pepper (sweet)	300 / 250
										Potato	270 / 200
PROGRAMME TWO										Spinach	140 / 100
17:30		A French film								Mandarin	250 / 180
19:00		News in French								Banana	350 / 300
19:15		French varieties									

Queen Noor to open cultural season at RCC

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage will open its end of year cultural season Wednesday at the Royal Cultural Centre under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor. Minister of Culture and National Heritage Mohammad Hammouri said the event will be a manifestation of Jordanian plastic art by 88 Jordanian artists who will display more than 200 pieces of art including paintings, ceramics and graphics.

There will also be two seminars during the week long cultural event dealing with plastic art, according to Hammouri who said that the gathering will be an annual event from now on.

On Thursday Queen Noor will visit the city of Irbid where she will hold meetings with the city Mayor Abdul Razzak Tubeishat and Governor Akram Al Naser, who will explain details of development plans for the Irbid region.

Later the Queen will unveil a commemorative plaque at the Sharari Square in Irbid. The square was set up in memory of one of the city's notables Ali Al Sharari who served with distinction in the Arab Revolt earlier this century and later after the Emirate of Transjordan was established in 1921.

Queen Noor is also scheduled Thursday to inaugurate the Queen Noor Roundabout and unveil a sculpture by Syrian artist Radwan Turab who will be present at the ceremony to brief the Queen on his work.

Queen Noor will later tour a number of parks in Irbid and will visit the children's library and club in the northern city.

After these ceremonies Queen Noor will lay the foundation stone for a bus terminal complex and will later inspect the activities and programmes of charitable organisations.



A car splashes water around Sunday after heavy rains that hit Jordan in the past three days (Photo by Yousef Al Allan)

Students sit for Tawjihi exams today

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — A total of 58,618 students in Jordan will Tuesday embark on an eight-day mid-year Tawjihi examination session set by the Ministry of Education.

A ministry spokesman said of these 15,262 students will sit for the scientific stream, 34,517 for the literary stream, and the rest will take examinations for the industrial, commercial, agricultural, nursing and hotel training streams.

The spokesman said sufficient halls have been assigned and teachers have been appointed to supervise the examination procedure and the marking of papers. The students will be taking the second and final examination session in June 1980.

Earlier this month the Ministry of Education announced that students in the occupied West

Bank schools will also take the General Secondary School Certificate (Tawjihi) Examinations one time at the end of the current 1988-1989 school year by June 1989.

Schools in the two banks of Jordan normally prepare their students for the two-session examinations at the Tawjihi level, but students in the West Bank last year took only the first session and because they were not able to sit for the second in view of the on going uprising, the results of the first session were considered for both terms.

Schools in the occupied lands have been closed for more than a year. And the students were reported taking lessons in churches, mosques and private homes, or in the fields to make up for the lack of proper training in classes.

Cabinet endorses housing strategy

AMMAN (Petra) — The council of ministers has approved recommendations by a ministerial committee on a national housing strategy in Jordan and said that the housing department, which

has been attached to the Ministry of Planning should now be associated to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

The council also decided to

shift responsibility for the Urban Development Department from the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

Ministries, society to discuss exporting eggs to Arab countries

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The Ministries of Agriculture and Industry and Trade will support efforts by the Jordan Society for the Production and Marketing of Eggs (JSPME) in marketing table eggs in neighbouring Arab countries, according to preliminary agreement reached Monday in talks between Minister of Industry and Trade Hamdi Tabbaa and the society director.

The minister said the society, being the only party responsible for the production and marketing of table eggs in Jordan and

marketing the product abroad, should be backed and helped to promote its activities.

At the meeting an agreement was reached according to which the society will prepare a working paper on specifications for poultry farms which produce eggs for the market, and submit that paper after a month to a meeting which will group specialists and officials from the two ministries and the society.

The coming meeting, according to the agreement, will determine the society's future responsibilities

towards organising the production of eggs in the Kingdom.

Last summer the society president, Suleiman Irteimel, said Jordan produces some 500 million table eggs annually but only 400 million are consumed in Jordan.

Some of the locally produced eggs have been sold to Iraq and South Yemen but a large quantity remains unsold. According to society sources Jordan's poultry farmers sustained a JD 1.6 million loss in 1986 due to a huge surplus of table eggs.

Hmoud, Ma'an Municipal Council members review 3-year plan

AMMAN (Petra) — A three-year plan for Ma'an in southern Jordan was reviewed here Monday by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Marwan Hmoud and the new Ma'an Municipal Council members.

The plan entails carrying out municipal projects, expanding public services and expanding the Ma'an city boundary, as well as the municipality's new task in the light of its financial situation.

On Sunday Hmoud and directors of the ministry's various departments reviewed regional planning in the country and the different uses of land.

Hmoud said later that discus-

sions centred on means of saving as much as possible of arable land for agricultural use and organising plots of land to be used for urban development in different provinces.

The ministry has provided sufficient maps of the regions of Irbid, in the north, Ma'raq in the centre and the southern regions of Tafleh and Karak with the help of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre, Hmoud said.

The minister said the meeting also discussed the national strategy on the environment which is being prepared by specialists in order to ensure a greater measure of environmental protection from pollution.

He added that ministry specialists are now maintaining control over sources of pollution in the Zarqa River largely caused by dumping factory waste.

The ministry's plans to study the environment in Jordan entails a general survey of the environment by collecting data and information from various regions. "The information will serve planners and policy makers in the coming stage of development," the minister noted.

He said a team of Swedish experts is due here in the coming month to conduct the survey and help Jordan determine the causes of pollution in the Zarqa Governorate.

Anani highlights importance of providing energy to remote areas

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Scientific Society (RSS) President Jawad Al Anani Monday said that the provision of energy to the remote areas helps provide many services and other facilities that support the comprehensive development of the country.

Addressing a two-day symposium on the use of solar and wind energy for pumping water and for

other uses in remote areas, Anani said that the increased knowledge and technology in the field of energy research has created new uses which are not linked with the oil prices.

Anani said that the drop in the oil prices creates a stronger justification for such uses. He outlined the RSS experiences in the field of solar and wind energy and

said that the society is currently undertaking research and applied projects in cooperation with Iraq and Egypt, and that it plans to expand bridges of cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Sudan, North Yemen and Libya.

The symposium is attended by 100 researchers and engineers from the various government and private institutions.

ACC approves JD 1.77m grant to farmers for 989 projects

AMMAN (Petra) — The Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) Board of Directors Monday approved a decision to grant JD 1,770,000 to farmers to help finance 989 new agricultural projects, thus bringing to JD 4.5 million the total loans granted since the beginning of this year.

At a meeting of the ACC board, chaired by Agriculture

Minister Yousef Hamdan Al Jabr, the board discussed a special study on Jordan's requirements of harvest machines and approved the granting of loans to farmers wishing to buy harvest machines, provided that the corporation's loan does not exceed 70 per cent of the price.

The board also discussed the corporation's financial situation

during the first 11 months of this year and announced that corporation revenues at the end of November stood at JD 3,300,000, and that they are expected to reach JD 4 million by the end of this year.

The minister called for the establishment of a bank for the various kinds of seeds.

Met. Department predicts phasing out of storm

Rain, snow drench Jordan

By a Jordan Times Staff Writer

AMMAN — Heavy rain fell in most regions of Jordan Monday for the third straight day, and intermittent snow fell in high regions, especially in the northern parts of the country, according to the Department of Meteorology Monday.

A department spokesman said that snowfall will continue until midnight in Ajloun in the north and Ras Al Naqab and Shobak in the south, while relatively little snow was expected in the capital, since the storm which affected the Kingdom in the past three days is now phasing out.

The spokesman told the Jordan Times that as of Tuesday noon, the storm caused by a depression, will end but chances for scattered rain will remain.

Three days of heavy rainfall in all parts of the Kingdom have tremendously increased underground water storage and brought delight to Jordanian farmers and cereal producers, according to officials at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Rain fell almost non-stop in many regions throughout Saturday, Sunday and Monday, flooding streets and homes and causing some material damage to property but no serious incidents or casualties, according to police and Civil Defence Department sources.

They said that damage was done to power lines, trees and roads while culverts were blocked with earth and rocks in some areas and small scale accidents occurred especially on the highways.

Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) Director General Mohammad Bani Hani said that no more water is now pumped from the reservoirs behind the dams to the fields in the Jordan Valley, since sufficient quantities are flowing there through the wadis and reservoirs are being replenished by rain water gathered in the valleys and finding its way to the lakes.

Bani Hani noted that until Sunday noon the reservoir behind the King Talal Dam near Jerash was estimated to contain 42 million cubic metres of water out of a total capacity of 90 million, while the Wadi Al Arab reservoir contained 5.3 million out of a total capacity of 20 million.

Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General Salem Al Lawzi told Al Ra'i Arabic daily that the rains were a blessing for Jordan since cereals need rain water during the month of December.

The Public Security Department said that all roads were passable except for the Muwaqqar Road south east of Amman due to the collapse of a culvert. But extra care should be taken by

motorists in view of the thick fog in the Amman region, the Ajloun district and in Ras Al Naqab.

The depression, which was centered in the Eastern Mediterranean region Friday and Saturday was Monday moving towards northern Iraq. The countries on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean were subjected to cold fronts from the polar region over the past three days that caused the heavy rains, according to the Department Director Ali

Abanda. He said as the strength of the storm diminishes Tuesday the country will still receive showers of rain particularly in the northern and central regions.

Greater Amman Municipality announced that its teams were in control of the situation in the capital and have succeeded in draining away rainwater which had flooded a number of districts.

A spokesman for the municipality said that teams were working and maintaining round the clock alert to deal with any emergency as a result of the continuous rainfall.

He said a municipality representative has been appointed to work with a Civil Defence central operations room that coordinates emergency assistance in Amman and its surrounding areas.



A team from the Greater Amman Municipality Sunday work to open a main road after it was blocked by heavy rainfall (Photo by Yousef Al Allan)

SAPLINGS DISTRIBUTED IN JERASH: The Department of Agriculture here has started distributing tree saplings to local farmers at nominal prices to be planted during the country's Arbor Day celebrations. A department spokesman said that farmers and various organisations, wishing to plant trees, can benefit from this offer and acquire fruit and forest trees from the department's nurseries in the Jerash district. (Petra)

RENEWAL OF LICENCES: The Greater Amman Municipality has embarked on a new plan to facilitate issuance and renewal of licences. The plan, which will be put into effect in early 1980, includes the use of computer. (Petra)

Campaign against meningitis ruled out

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Health has ruled out the prospect of conducting a national campaign to provide protection to members of the public against meningitis and said that its views in this respect is being backed by a special committee representing the health services in the

Kingdom.

The director of the Ministry of Health's Department of Primary Health Care, Dr. Suleiman Qubain, said that there is no justification to launch a national vaccination campaign against this disease which, he said, has infected a number of citizens.

He said some people received vaccination against the disease but that was done on their own personal initiative and desire.

Qubain said the Health Ministry was taking other protective measures such as providing vaccination to contacts of the meningitis victims.

RSS to study corrosion of metals used in manufacturing solar heaters

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Scientific Society (RSS) will conduct a study on the corrosion of metal used in the manufacture of solar water heaters in Jordan and provide advice on the best possible components that would ensure a longer life of the device, according to an agreement signed by the RSS and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources Tuesday.

Metal fatigue, rust and stress are factors that affect metal under different climatic conditions, and

the RSS is concerned to help ensure a longer operational life of the solar panels and collectors by reducing corrosion, according to an RSS spokesman.

He said under the two-year agreement, RSS specialists will conduct studies on various components and metals used in the manufacture of these heaters and advise the Ministry of Energy on the best and more feasible ones, to ensure a longer operational life.

Solar heaters have been common in Jordan over the past 15 years, and they are installed by a number of local companies on the roofs of homes to provide water heated by the power of the sun, a technique encouraged by RSS to save fuel and electricity.

The agreement was signed by RSS President Jawad Al Anani and Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Hisham Al Khatib.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ An art exhibition by Friends of Plastic Art in Gulf countries at the National Gallery
- ★ The youth's art exhibition which displays 101 paintings showing the different aspects of social life in Jordan at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ An exhibition of works by Contemporary Arab Artists at Al Wasiti Art Gallery.
- ★ An exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz at Alla Art Gallery — 5:30 p.m.

FILMS

- ★ A Chinese film entitled "The Crescent Moon" at the Royal Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.
- ★ A documentary on Hollywood film director George Cuckor at the American Centre — 7:00 p.m.

SYMPOSIUM

- ★ A symposium on the use of solar energy and wind energy for pumping water at the Mechanical Engineering Department, at the Royal Scientific Society.

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Jordan Times

An Independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

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Better airline safety

ALTHOUGH the exact cause of the Pan American Airways disaster last Thursday has yet to be determined, the crash of Flight 103 from London en route to New York, has highlighted a chronic problem facing all airlines: Aging jets still in operation. And it is now revealed that the Boeing 747 used by Pan Am on that ill-fated flight was an aging jet manufactured nearly two decades ago. While the age factor of the jet in question cannot be named the culprit for the crash in view of the preponderance of the evidence thus far pointing to the high probability that sabotage was responsible for its mid-air disintegration, structural fatigue of jets still used by airlines the world over has yet to be accorded the scrutiny that it deserves.

One of the hypothesis advanced in the aftermath of the Pan Am crash was that the jet in question was so old that it may have suffered from structural fatigue causing the collapse of one of the wings of the airplane while airborne over Scotland. The odds are against this being the cause of the crash. Nevertheless the problem of aging remains a serious issue that deserves more attention and concern by both manufacturers of airplanes and their users. It would seem fitting even from a layman's point of view that airplanes be given a life span during which they may operate safely. Unfortunately, however, neither manufacturers of airplanes nor the airlines that deploy them are keeping sufficient tabs of the aging problem that contributes to potentially fatal structural fatigues in the airplanes operated worldwide. The day will surely come when airlines would be expected to announce the type and age of aircraft operated. Likewise, manufacturers of aircraft would be expected by law to announce the safe life expectancy of their products. This is the only sensible way to keep abreast of events and circumstances leading to aviation disasters.

Perhaps one of the principal reasons for the relaxation of safeguards affecting civilian air transportation is deregulation. Deregulation and cutthroat competition between airlines have led to cutting corners at the cost of decreasing safety and comfort. But it so happens that flying is a very serious and hazardous business, and that the safety factor must never be sacrificed for the sake of profitability and material success. From now on airlines would be better advised to advertise not only their prices competitive as they may be but also the age of their equipment and their standard of maintenance. This is of course over and above the security checks that must be maintained at the highest level possible. No amount of inconvenience to passengers can be too much for the sake of making sure that sabotage and other forms of threats to the security of flying are kept at minimal level if not outright eliminated.

ARABIC PRESS EDITORIALS

ALL THREE Jordanian Arabic dailies on Monday tackled the situation in the occupied Arab territories as the uprising continues and current efforts are maintained at the international level to bring about a just peace. Al Ra'i daily said that Israel wants to impose on the Arabs a kind of peace that would allow it to perpetuate its hold over the occupied Arab territories so that Zionist expansionist plans can continue unhindered. Israeli leaders want to have land and peace together and are not ready to offer any concessions to reach a genuine peace and a lasting settlement, the paper added. It said that despite the PLO's acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and despite the clear Arab orientation towards peace, the Israelis continue to adhere to their extremist policies and to maintain their iron fist strategy in confrontation with the Palestinians. Israel's latest decision to set up eight new settlements in the occupied Arab lands was a clear message to the world that Tel Aviv would never give up Arab land and was not ready to swap land for peace, the paper said. Since the new coalition government in Israel has been empowered to take any decisions and execute all resolutions imposed by the extremist Zionist groups, the paper concluded, then one can have little hopes of any real orientation towards peace in the foreseeable future.

Writing in Al Ra'i Arabic daily the newspaper's editor Rakan Al Majali tackles the position of Syria in relation with Arab issues and the current initiatives for peace. There is always an importance for the Syrian role whether issues are related to Lebanon, the PLO or the confrontation with Israel, largely due to Syria's geographical location and its proximity to all these important issues, the writer says. Majali says of course Syria does not hold all the cards in the Middle East question but it has a significant role in Lebanon and in any military or political solutions for that country's internal problems. Although Syria continues to criticise Arafat's steps and policies and maintains its support for Arafat's opponents, Damascus is not really against the current Palestinian moves towards achieving peace, but in reality it rather blesses such moves which aim at a comprehensive settlement through the projected international peace conference, Majali noted. He says that there are now clear indications of real change in Syria's traditional policies, and its overtures to have peace with Iraq and Egypt stands out as further evidence that Damascus is determined to mend its fences with its Arab sisters and to embark on a role that would bring about peace to the region.

Al Dustour daily wrote Monday on the escalation in the current uprising in the occupied Arab territories which, it said, bears indications that the revolt is gaining ground and involving all the public sectors. Christmas Day Sunday was a good opportunity for the Palestinians to show solidarity and a further determination to step up their campaign of struggle for peace. Following the religious ceremonies in churches in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah, the Arab masses went out into the streets stoning the Israeli soldiers in a real courageous show of solidarity with the residents of refugee camps in Gaza and other parts of the occupied land, the paper noted. The Israelis for their part seem to be determined to maintain their iron fist policy and are therefore continuing to confront the Palestinians with all forms of repression, the paper added.

Sawt Al Shaab daily called for an Arab summit which it said can deal with the current circumstances resulting from the on-going struggle in Palestine and the PLO's recent favourable moves towards peace. The paper said that the Israelis have formed a coalition government clearly bent on pursuing the repressive policies dictated by world Zionism and maintained by the Likud Bloc and therefore one can expect more violence in the occupied lands resulting from further criminal actions by Israeli troops against the Arabs.

Arab side must brace for the worst

By Waleed Sadi

THERE ARE many absurdities in the Israeli stance on peace in the Middle East but its request that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accept its right to exist tops them all. For a regional power like Israel to call on a liberation organisation struggling for an embryonic state on its eastern flank till the Jordan River to recognise its right to exist defies all logic and common sense.

The answer may lie in the proposition that Israel's feeling of insecurity is so deep and profound that it even demands the assurances of an infant political organisation striving feverishly for acceptance from Israel above all. If anything, this Israeli anxiety accentuates the psychological dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict and highlights the needs to address the non-geopolitical issues that divides the Israelis from the Arabs.

Upon closer scrutiny of the Israeli rejection of the PLO's peace overtures, one would readily discern that its disbelief of the good intentions of the Palestinian side permeates their reaction to such peace offers. There are voices from the Israeli side which question the sincerity of the Palestinian words of peace because they were made in the context of a press interview rather than in a formal setting as the United Nations General Assembly. Others, having been accustomed to bellicose voices from the Arab side, especially from the Palestinian side, find it difficult to believe their ears when

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat uttered the words that made history in the Middle East few weeks ago. With the latest poll in Israel indicating that 54 per cent of the Israelis now favour talks with the PLO on the basis of the assurances made public by the PLO on the terms for peace in the Middle East, there is an obvious erosion of the suspicion of the PLO's intentions entertained by Israelis. If the PLO persists in its on-going path and reaffirms its declared position on peace between Israel and the Arab side, one would expect further erosion in this Israeli scepticism at the end of the tunnel.

If anxiety over the future is driving Israeli thinking to such negative proportions as the world has witnessed, especially in the wake of the Arab acceptance of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, including the right of Israel to exist, one would have thought that Israel of all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict would insist on an international conference on peace in the Middle East under the direct aegis of the United Nations Security Council in order to receive the kind of security guarantees that it may need in the future. What better way to assuage Israeli fears for the future than to have the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council guaranteeing a peace treaty between Israel and the Arab side.

For many generations to come both the United States and Soviet

Union empires would continue to dominate the international scene. Surely Israel and Israel's long-term interests would call for the participation of the big powers in order to affix their signatures and seals of approval to any peace agreement that may ensue from negotiations between the Arab side and Israel.

Surely status quo poses greater dangers to Israel than movement in the direction of holding an international peace conference. And since the terms of any futuristic peace agreement in the Middle East have already been accepted by the parties beforehand all that remains would not necessitate any arms twisting for either the Arab or Israeli side.

Under the existing political situation in Israel not much can be expected to emerge in support of convening an international peace conference. A two-headed government can never muster the coordination level necessary to wage peace with the Arab side. As all political projections point to the high probability that the Shamir-Peres government would enjoy the shortest life expectancy ever, the mushrooming support among Israeli voters for a dialogue with the PLO would have their chance to make their perspective better reflected in the next national Israeli elections. Till then the Arab side must brace itself for the worst.

Gulf Arab states set conditions for better Iran ties

By Philip Shehadi

Reuter

BAHRAIN — Iraq's Gulf Arab allies have linked full normalisation of ties with Iran to a lasting Gulf peace and a commitment by Tehran not to interfere in their internal affairs.

A Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit that ended Thursday, the first without war raging in the region, vowed to help turn a fragile Iran-Iraq ceasefire that took hold last August into permanent peace.

The leaders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) cited ties of religion and heritage linking all Gulf states.

But there were no grand overtures of friendship to Iran in a cautious final communiqué that set general principles for the post-war era.

"Our relations in the region must be on this basis — peace, good neighbourliness and non-interference with normal relations," Bahraini Foreign Minister

Sheikh Mohammad Ibn Mubarak Al Khalifa told a news conference late Thursday.

The Gulf Arab states accused Iran during the last years of the war of mining their sea lanes, attacking their oil tankers and firing missiles into their oil installations.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran last April, citing hostile acts including alleged support for internal sabotage.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Riyadh said Tehran instigated demonstrations at the annual Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca in July 1987 in which hundreds died in clashes with Saudi security forces. Tehran boycotted this year's pilgrimage.

Tension has eased since the ceasefire, and King Fahd ordered a halt in Saudi media attacks last October that was quickly reciprocated by Iran.

Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani earlier this

week even predicted the resumption of normal ties with Riyadh soon.

But a Western observer at the summit said the Saudis and Iran first had to agree on the number of Iranian pilgrims who would be allowed to attend next year's pilgrimage and a ban on political demonstrations in Mecca.

Saudi Arabia was also concerned that pro-Iranian Muslim fundamentalists might be active in the kingdom, he added.

Until such problems were overcome the GCC as a group was unlikely to make new overtures to Iran although individual states — notably Kuwait and Bahrain — have upgraded diplomatic representation since the ceasefire, the observer said.

Oman and the UAE, the closest geographically to Iran, maintained good relations with Iran throughout the war.

Another stumbling block is the fragility of the ceasefire and lack of progress towards full implementation of U.N. Resolution

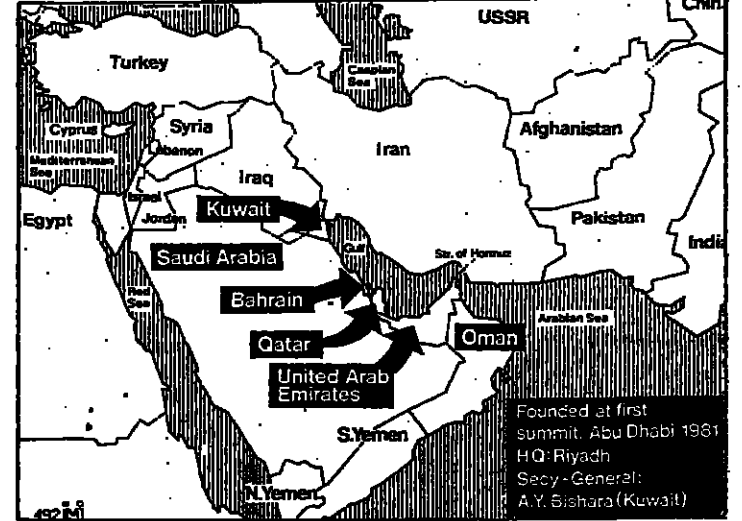
598 which calls for a troop withdrawal, exchange of prisoners and a comprehensive settlement of the eight-year-long conflict.

"We are now living in a period after the ceasefire. But we want to live in a period of permanent peace," Sheikh Mohammad said. Geneva peace talks adjourned indefinitely last month and the GCC states feel unable to let their guard down.

The summit pledged to make contact with the international community and especially permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to help implement Resolution 598 and get the talks moving.

"We will talk to the countries concerned and the permanent members of the Security Council... We hope we will have a breakthrough soon," Sheikh Mohammad said.

The Iran-Iraq war left a million killed or wounded and led to a major foreign naval build-up in the Gulf that has only slightly eased since the ceasefire.



A radar in question

IN a column published in Al Ra'i Saturday, columnist Faeq Al Fanek wonders about the use of a radar purchased by Jordan recently from an American firm at a cost of more than \$10 million.

Jordan Television, Fanek writes, enthusiastically carried the news about the purchase of the "modern" radar for Aqaba Airport which receives planes loaded with tourists. JTV, he continues, told us that the radar was one of the most modern and complicated pieces of equipment in the world, capable of dealing with 250 airplanes at once. It also said the radar was the first of its kind to be exported by the U.S.

"We are thankful for that great device but we recollect the austerity measures taken by the government, measures which we so innocently supported," Fanek writes. "We stress again the importance of sorting out our priorities because spending money on what is not essential will deprive us from what is essential and basic," he adds.

Having a radar of that kind, Fanek contends, costs no less than \$1 million in interest, maintenance and operational costs as well as spare parts — all this in view of the fact that in the course of a year no more than 25 airplanes are expected to land at Aqaba Airport. According to Fanek's calculations, the cost of one aircraft landing at Aqaba Airport is \$100,000. Assuming each aircraft carries 100 passengers, the cost, as far as the government is concerned, for each tourist would be \$1,000, an

amount far less than what the government would pay on potential tourism on the whole, Fanek believes.

As for the radar being the first of its kind to be exported by the U.S., Fanek says: "We do not understand what that exactly means. Did the rest of the countries in the world refuse to use such a radar because of its high costs? Is it that airports all over the world, such as Singapore, Tokyo and Bahrain, find that their requirements are not up to the requirements of Aqaba Airport? Or is it perhaps that those countries are not as good as we are in putting aside foreign currencies for more productive purposes?" Fanek asks.

"We do not know whether this radar will serve the immense air traffic to Aqaba or whether it is the traffic that will serve the radar... to that effect, we now fear that new and modern planes will be purchased to fly on the Amman-Aqaba route at night in order to put the radar to use," Fanek continues. Even in that case, he notes, no more than one aircraft would be flying on that route, and it could not possibly come into collision with itself because air traffic over Aqaba Airport is "nil". Even if such a radar were given as an American grant, Fanek concludes: "We are entitled to an opinion on how (that grant) would be put to use, in accordance with our priorities — such an amount is enough to build 50 schools, for example," Fanek concludes.

Islands hold key to Soviet-Japan ties

By Graham Earnshaw

Reuter

TOKYO — Moscow has them, Tokyo wants them back — a handful of tiny, barren islands in a corner of the Pacific are the key to any advance in Soviet-Japanese relations.

Three days of talks between Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Japanese officials about the islands, occupied more than 43 years ago by Soviet troops in the closing days of World War II, brought no progress.

Political analysts in Tokyo said they suspected that if Japan stuck to its position long enough, economic pressures could force the Soviet Union to compromise, as it is eager to gain greater access to Japanese technology and investment.

Tokyo says the islands at the end of the Kurile chain are an inalienable part of Japanese territory and must be handed back before relations can become normal.

"Sooner or later, the Soviet Union will face some difficulties on the European front in the economy, and they might have to turn towards the Pacific," said

Tokyo University Associate Professor Takashi Inoguchi.

"With that kind of general economic weakness, and a general stalemate on the European front, they might be more willing to compromise with the Japanese,"

Akio Kimura, a Sovietologist at Tokyo's Aoyama Gakuin University, said a Soviet compromise of a portion of the islands, was conceivable, while a Japanese compromise was impossible. "Japan has acquired some bargaining power because the Soviet Union now really needs Japan's money and technology," he said.

A Western diplomat said a compromise was more in the Soviet Union's long term interest.

"They have far more they need from Japan than Japan needs from the Soviet Union, so it's understandable that Japan should be putting an issue it feels very strongly about to the fore," the diplomat said.

Moscow has surprised the world time and again over the past year with its willingness to compromise to solve long-standing problems. But Shevardnadze had no compromises up his sleeve when he came to Tokyo.

"There doesn't appear to have

been any movement at all," a Western diplomat said. "There were a few people who thought they (the Soviets) would come up with a bit more, but that certainly hasn't materialised as far as we can see."

The islands are virtually useless economically though their location just off the coast of Hokkaido, Japan's main northern island, gives them important strategic value.

For Japanese people, it is a simple territorial issue — the islands are Japanese and the Soviets must give them back.

Japan has refused to sign a peace treaty with the Soviet Union formally ending World War II until the issue is solved and appears to be holding out for a compromise similar to one which seemed to be on the cards in 1956.

The two sides signed a communique in 1956 in which Moscow agreed to return some islands and negotiate the return of a peace treaty. But in 1960, after revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty, Moscow said the issue was settled and refused to discuss it further.

It remains an emotional issue in Japan and political analysts say

it would be political suicide for any leader to agree to a deal giving up Japan's claim to the islands.

"The Japanese government has no great need or incentive to go against public opinion on it," said one Western diplomat.

Some Japanese companies are very interested in gaining a foothold in the Soviet market and in tapping the huge oil and mineral reserves in Siberia for Japan's benefit.

The Western diplomat said the economic benefits to Japan of a closer relationship with Moscow were overstated.

"Fifteen years ago there was all sorts of talk about energy-technology deals and it never happened, not because of political considerations but because there wasn't the basic infrastructure in Siberia, there wasn't the pay-off that some industrialists hoped there would be," he said.

Tokyo University's Inoguchi said most Japanese companies would not commit themselves to a full relationship with the Soviet Union until the island problem was solved.

"Most of the private sector is very cautious about that. They tend to follow the flag," he said.

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Palestinian camp women embroider cushions and tablecloths with traditional cross-stitch designs.



A woman carries her child through chest-deep water in Bangladesh.

Mennonites help world artisans help themselves

By Marcia Dunn
The Associated Press

PENNSYLVANIA — In this season of giving, a Mennonite-run group is offering handmade beads, bangles, baskets and other Third World crafts — not with profits in mind, but to give the world's poor a chance to help themselves.

The crafts come from Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, India, the Philippines and Thailand, among other nations.

"Generally, if you're trying to make a business out of this, you're going to go and find somebody who already knows how to do this as efficiently as possible," said Doug Dirks, marketing director for Selfhelp Crafts. "You buy from them. That's what makes sense. Our objective is a little bit different."

"We don't care so much about what North American customers

want to buy," agreed Selfhelp's Doris Daley. "We care more about finding this poor man in the slum of Calcutta and thinking, 'well, maybe we can sell his wares or help him along.'"

Patients at a leprosy rehabilitation centre in Thailand who carve teak elephants, widows in Guatemala who weave scarves and belts, and Haitian refugees in the Dominican Republic who design greeting cards from banana tree bark — these are among the approximately 30,000 people making selfhelp crafts.

Floods, snakes

The tasks are taken very seriously, said Ms. Daley, citing a letter from Bangladesh that explained, "we're trying really hard to make the order, but please understand that we're a month or two late because our women are wading around in water up to their knees. The houses have all been flooded, and it's real hard to sew bags. There are snakes all

over." For some, the jobs mean the "difference between eating and not eating. It's as simple as that," Dirks said.

For others, the work is a hand-out to a new life. "We're trying to give them jobs so they can earn their own money and they can spend it on a roof or medicine or schoolbooks or education for themselves, rather than sitting under a tree waiting for the relief truck to come rolling by," Ms. Daley said.

Selfhelp's mostly volunteer staff reaches out to needy neighbours from its Akron headquarters and warehouse in eastern Pennsylvania. The affiliated Selfhelp Crafts Canada, for which Ms. Daley serves as education coordinator, is based in New Hamburg, Ontario.

Both groups are run by the Mennonite central committee, a Development and Disaster Relief Organisation of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Churches,

both part of the Anabaptist movement.

Peaceful living

Like the Amish, Mennonites favour plain, peaceful living and oppose military service and the taking of oaths. Lifestyles vary among the world's approximately 740,000 Mennonites, however, ranging from those who wear black and ride in horse-drawn buggies to the majority who enjoy modern clothes and amenities, including cars.

Mennonite missionaries often are Selfhelp's link to the needy in developing nations. Virtually all of Selfhelp's artisans live far from the tourist track and have no local market for their goods, crafted with traditional skills.

Selfhelp Crafts was begun in 1946 by Edna Byler, a Mennonite woman who had travelled to Puerto Rico with her husband to visit Mennonite Central Committee Volunteers. She was so impressed with local women's need-

lework that she took several items home to sell for them.

Palestinian cross-stitch

Unprepared for the demand, Byler placed more orders to Puerto Rico. Within six years, she had added cross-stitched tablecloths made by Palestinian refugees and hand-carved Haitian woodenware.

"She would go to the bank or post office and people would wave her down and say, 'oh, Byler, what have you got in the trunk of your car today?'" Ms. Daley said. "We say that our first cash register was the pocket of Byler's apron."

Byler operated the project out of the basement of her home until the Mennonite Central Committee took over in 1962 and expanded it to 10 countries under the name of the Overseas Needlework and Crafts Project. Byler retired in 1969, and the name of the group was changed to Selfhelp Crafts the following year.

The first Selfhelp store opened in Manitoba in 1972. Two years later, the first U.S. shop opened in Bluffton, Ohio.

Now there are 72 Selfhelp shops in the United States and about 40 in Canada, run by 7,000 volunteers.

North American sales exceeded \$6 million in 1988, a record, and represented crafts from 33 countries, according to Dirks.

But not everyone welcomes the opportunity to buy imported crafts.

"We have a number of persons who look at something that says, 'Made in the Philippines,' 'Made in Thailand,' then they walk out," said Ann Roth, manager of the Selfhelp store in the nearby town of Bird in Hand.

"On several occasions, I've had a chance to explain to them why we import the products. Sometimes those have turned around and become sales because they realise what we're trying to do."



The Emperor

Bedridden Hirohito begins 63rd year of reign

By Eric Talmadge
The Associated Press

TOKYO — For bedridden Emperor Hirohito, Christmas day marked the anniversary of his father's death and the beginning of his 63rd year on the throne, the longest reign ever in the world's oldest imperial line.

On Christmas morning, court priests and members of the imperial family observed the anniversary of Emperor Taisho's death in 1926 at a simple wooden shrine on the forested grounds of the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo.

The Christmas rite is one of the most important of dozens held annually at the palace, and Emperor Hirohito normally would preside, say officials at the Imperial Household Agency, which manages palace affairs.

But this year, Hirohito, 87, bedridden and seriously ill with internal hemorrhaging, was represented by the Chief Court Priest, Motofumi Higashizono. Hirohito's wife, Empress Nagako, 85, was also absent.

Hirohito's illness, which began three months ago, has rekindled public interest in the imperial institution — prompting a mood

of respectful self-restraint among some, anti-monarchy protest among others.

"The emperor is like air," said Shizuka Kamei, a conservative member of parliament. "You don't notice how important it is until it starts to run out."

During Hirohito's reign, Japan has seen years of war followed by defeat, foreign occupation and a rise to the status of economic superpower.

His reign also saw a redefining of the imperial role from sovereign head of state in the prewar constitution to postwar "symbol of the nation."

Enigma

But hidden behind a shroud of mystery and plagued by unanswered questions about his personal role during World War II, Hirohito is an enigma even to many Japanese.

"The emperor's illness is making people rethink their relationship with him and with each other in general," said Kazushi Sano, chief researcher of the Association of Shinto Shrines.

Before renouncing divine status in 1946, Hirohito was considered a living god to followers of Shinto, Japan's indigenous reli-

gion. Soon after he fell ill, cancellations of parties, festivals, weddings and politicians' travels away from the capital led the government to publicly declare that over-restraint "would not be what the emperor would want."

Groups opposed to the monarchy, ranging from radical leftists to Protestant Christian organisations, became more vocal in their criticism of the emperor.

Tokyo police believe a left-wing group last week set fire to foliage on the grounds of a mausoleum where Hirohito's father and mother are buried. In October, radicals are believed to have vandalised the tomb of Japan's legendary first emperor.

For politicians, even the suggestion that the emperor bears responsibility for Japan's wartime actions can bring serious repercussions.

Hundreds of extreme rightists assembled in Nagasaki Wednesday and Thursday to protest what they called a disrespectful remark by Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima, an independent who had been backed by the Ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

On the 47th anniversary of Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, Motoshima said, "I think the emperor bears some responsibility for the war." The comment prompted death threats to the mayor of a city known as the second ever to suffer an atomic bombing.

During the war, Hirohito was a figurehead constitutional monarch but he was required to — and did — approve all major wartime decisions. Japanese soldiers were told to fight to the death for the emperor's honour.

Lack of power

Despite his lack of political power, he was able to decide to end the war when the government was evenly divided in August 1945 after the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The emperor's physical endurance has surprised a team of palace doctors and nurses who have maintained a 24-hour vigil since the onset of his health crisis. He has been given massive blood transfusions, after repeated episodes of hemorrhaging.

Local news media have reported that Hirohito has cancer, but the palace refuses to confirm or deny the reports. In September 1987, he underwent intestinal bypass surgery.

Hospitals where doctors sleep and rats run wild

By Barry Moody
Reuters

ROME — Hospitals where patients die at night without proper care, where doctors go to work only to sleep, where rats and cockroaches run around the kitchens.

This is the picture of Italy's health service that emerges not only from an often horrifying private survey but from Health Minister Carlo Donat Cattin himself.

In a recent parliamentary debate on public health reform, the minister caused shock and controversy by declaring: "Patients are dying at night in hospitals because of lack of public facilities, above all staff."

Donat Cattin, who says Italy needs 12,500 new doctors, followed up by saying in a newspaper interview: "It is unthinkable that in Italy in 1988 you can die without medical help, that people are abandoned."

The minister said in the interview that investigations into a recent death of a woman in hospital showed the same doctors always worked the night shift. "In my opinion that means those doctors had other jobs and went to hospital only to sleep... Unfortunately the health system in this country is full of such stories," he said.

An independent pressure group called "The Tribunal for the Rights of the Sick" recently published a survey compiled by its secretary, Teresa Petrangolini, after a 13,000 kilometre tour of 99 public hospitals all over Italy.

"...auts can make harrowing reading."

A hospital cook in southern Italy said rats had been emerging from a drain outside the kitchen for years. Even after it was covered with a grill a rat was found in hospital soup.

One-woman crusade

Petrangolini says "platoons" of cockroaches were seen in the kitchen of another hospital in the east.

In Sardinia waste products from dialysis of hepatitis patients spilled onto the floor from unsuitable and inadequate containers. Elsewhere, babies were bathed in the same sink used to rinse floor

cloths and patients got up at 3 a.m. so as not to queue for a bath.

The publicity attracted by Petrangolini's crusade, has already borne fruit and she passionately believes in the power of her movement, which she says is backed by millions of citizens and has promoted a new awareness of patients' rights.

"You would not believe that a person like me, not a doctor, not a nurse, not an administrator has been able to do what I have done," she told Reuters.

"I have succeeded in opening new wards, in fixing bathrooms, in having wards painted... I have even succeeded in making the chairman of one local health authority resign."

In a 10-year struggle to give patients the same civil rights as healthy citizens, Petrangolini's tribunal has established offices in hospitals all over the country where patients, doctors and nurses can report abuses.

A law promoted by her group is now being discussed in parliament. It would give legal status to 60 "charters of the rights of the sick" drawn up by these offices and would set up machinery for hearing patients' complaints against doctors.

Doctors hotly rejected Donat Cattin's remarks and said they often worked in impossible conditions. They said the health service must be totally reorganised.

The minister has in fact proposed a series of reforms to increase efficiency and reduce waste so that the health service can be rationalised. Savings would help pay for 80,000 new hospital staff who he says are necessary.

Petrangolini, 37, a former foreign ministry official, said she was motivated by "a feeling of deep indignation about the systematic violation of the rights... of citizens who need to avail themselves of services vital for survival."

Forcefulness

She says many doctors are overwhelmingly arrogant and are not trained to consider the dignity of the patients, often identifying them only by numbers or the name of their illness.

At a hospital in northern Italy,

she said, a doctor told a burns patient screaming with pain that he would call the police if she did not keep quiet.

In another hospital when relatives called a night doctor for an old man with a cerebral haemorrhage he shouted down the ward: "There's no point in looking at him, he's going to die anyway."

Petrangolini has frequently taken things into her own hands to get results, including pushing hospital administrators into opening new, well-equipped wards and operating theatres kept closed only because of bureaucratic delays.

She found that at one psychiatric hospital, the patients had to drink out of a tap in the bathroom because there were no glasses. She went out and bought paper cups, shaming authorities into an extraordinary burst of activity.

"The next day they bought real glasses, jugs, bread baskets, clothes for the patients as well as repairing the electricity supply, and replacing window glass and catches."

The pain of exile in America

By Kathleen Christison

SAN FRANCISCO — "The feeling I have about Palestine is one of deprivation," says Stanford University linguistics Professor Khalil Barhoum, explaining the pain of exile that many Palestinian Americans acutely feel.

"I don't think I'll ever feel normal about it. I'll never be the same — I don't even know what 'the same' means to me."

Prof. Barhoum was born in Bethlehem a few years after his family fled their village outside occupied Jerusalem in 1948. Israel incorporated what remains of the village into Jerusalem, and the Barhoum home, which Khalil visited in 1967, is now occupied by Moroccan Jews. His views express the sentiments of large numbers of Palestinian Americans who speak of an indefinable sense of longing and exclusion.

Some Palestinian Americans do not experience the emotions of exile in a deep way, even though they may be active in the Palestinian struggle. But for those who do, exile is something that keeps them apart from the American mainstream. They feel that their loss is unique and that no complacent American can ever truly understand what it is like to be displaced from a homeland.

"For you, as an American, to be kicked out of this country and welcomed nowhere, acknowledged by nobody, and told you will never be able to see America, how would you feel?" asks Karim Dajani, a student at St. John's College in Santa Fe, N.M. Dajani's father fled Jaffa, his mother Jerusalem in 1948; and Karim was born in Beirut. He has never seen his parents' homeland.

Exclusion

The feeling of exclusion that accompanies exile is heightened for Palestinians here by the fact that Israel is so prominent in the news media — and by the mind-set in the United States that seems, to Palestinians, to accord legitimacy to everything Israeli but to nothing Palestinian.

This extends even to the level of foods and customs. Palestinians bristle when falafel, an Arab sandwich consisting of fried spiced chickpea balls served in pita bread, is described as Israeli, or when at international folk festivals Palestinian dances and songs are called Israeli.

"It's so frustrating," says a San Francisco English teacher, who asked that her name not be used because it might endanger her family in the West Bank.

"If you see someone eating falafel and he thinks it's Israeli, he wonders around."

It is a common plaint among Palestinians — why everyone but them has somewhere to go — The Christian Science Monitor.

you have to go into books and books of history to explain why falafel isn't Israeli. You go away frustrated, and he doesn't get the point. He thinks you're an agitator and gets nervous. 'Oh, gee' — she draws back in mock fear — 'a terrorist!'

The peculiar pain of enforced exile is often quite sharp. An engineer from Nablus, who also asked that his name not be used to protect his family, rues the wastefulness.

He says he feels he "would be in a position to contribute something" if he could go back.

"An engineer is trained to build things. But what's happened is that all these Palestinians who studied engineering went and built buildings and roads and bridges in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq — but not in their own homeland."

Not only those who fled Palestine in 1948 experience this sense of exile. Many Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza either were outside the area in 1967 when Israel took over and could not return, or left after the occupation to study or work and lost their right to residence.

Control

An aspect of Israeli control of the territories that is unfamiliar to most Americans is that, to live there, a Palestinian must have an identity card issued by the Israelis. This serves as a residency permit. But anyone who was not there when ID cards were issued in the wake of the occupation finds it almost impossible to obtain one. Students who leave temporarily to study often find that the Israelis have allowed their permits to expire.

Examples are legion. The Nablus engineer's mother was on a brief assignment with her husband in the Gulf when Israel captured the West Bank in 1967. She tried for 20 years to obtain a residency permit and only succeeded in 1987.

A sense of helplessness and profound frustration accompany exile. Mohammed Rajab, a Houston merchant, returned to Gaza last year after he had been shot by an armed robber in the U.S. Rajab had to leave Gaza regularly to renew his visitor's permit and this became too troublesome, so he is back in the U.S.

"Why the Jews from South Africa, from Ethiopia, from Russia, they come and stay and they are welcome. And they don't have any background there?" he wonders aloud.

It is a common plaint among Palestinians — why everyone but them has somewhere to go — The Christian Science Monitor.

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U.S. stiffens opposition to buffet IMF resources

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States, defying its allies on what will be an important economic policy issue for the Bush administration, is opposing plans to pump more money into the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The tough stance could set the stage for a clash between Washington and its major trading partners, most of whom favour an increase in the fund's \$120 billion capital base and want a decision by April.

"The United States continues to look at this with a very careful eye and there still remain a number of issues which are of concern to us," a U.S. official told Reuters.

The policy-making Interim Committee of the IMF, at its last meeting in Berlin in September, instructed the fund to prepare for a rise in quotas, or membership subscriptions, by the panel's next meeting in Washington on April 3.

But continued opposition by the United States, as the lending agency's largest shareholder, makes it increasingly likely that the April deadline will be put back.

"I don't know what is going to happen... but it's certainly possible legally to further extend the

deadline for an increase and it may well be that additional time is needed to resolve some of these difficulties," said the U.S. official, who declined to be identified.

Washington's misgivings about the need for new capital for the IMF, which makes loans to countries with balance of payments problems, were summed up by Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady in Berlin.

"At the time of competing demands and budget constraints, the case for additional quota resources must be compelling. There should be a clear vision of the fund in the 1990s and a demonstrated need for more funds — not simply a presumption that more is better," Brady said.

Since then, Bush has decided to conduct a major review of Third World debt strategy, providing yet another reason in the eyes of U.S. officials not to rush into an IMF quota increase.

As the next stage of the debt

strategy is likely to stress reducing the Third World's \$1.3 trillion debt instead of adding to it with new loans, the U.S. wants time to analyse what the consequences would be for the IMF, according to monetary sources familiar with the treasury's thinking.

The administration also wants to examine the fund's role in helping the Group of Seven industrial nations plan their economic policies, the sources said.

Washington, whose relations with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus are chilly, is wary of letting the IMF gain too much influence in this field.

Brady said in West Berlin that the problem of arrears owed to the fund by cash-strapped debtors such as Peru and Zambia also posed a hurdle to any increase in IMF resources.

Progress is being made on the arrears, but the breakthrough that the United States is looking for has not yet occurred.

Monetary sources said the overdue payments had reached \$3.5 billion and were still climbing.

The administration believes all these questions need to be addressed before it can seek additional funds from a Congress that is under pressure to curb spending.

Polish parliament approves major economic reforms

WARSAW (AP) — Parliament has approved bills allowing any private person to open a business of unlimited size and making it far easier for foreigners to invest in communist-ruled Poland.

The two pieces of legislation, which become law Jan. 1, are the linchpins of the government's plans to restructure Poland's socialist economy, and reverse four decades of encroaching state control of enterprises.

The 460-member Sejm, or parliament, approved the new "law on economic activity" unanimously with two abstentions. The bill on foreign investment drew

two "no" votes and six abstentions, the official PAP news agency reported.

Private business now accounts for about six per cent of Poland's non-farm economy.

Industry Minister Mieczyslaw Wilitczek called passage of the bills a "historic breakthrough" and has said he hopes thousands of new businesses will open next year.

Although the government has expressed high hopes for the legislation, there have been some doubts published in the press.

"To... be able to invest in something, one has to have some-

thing to invest in," said an article in the weekly magazine Wprost. "The majority of Polish families spend their earnings on current consumption and cannot afford" to start business.

Only "richer citizens have now gained an opportunity to show what they can do," the article concluded.

Under the economic-activity law, Poland's three business sectors — state-owned, cooperative and private — are treated the same for legal purposes, removing past restrictions on private ownership.

Previously, private business was limited in size to 50 employees and businesses needed permission to operate from administrative officials. Businesses could be turned down if a state or local official felt they were needed or interfered with an existing state or cooperative monopoly.

But the new law removes the limit on the size of the workforce and states that individuals, cooperatives, partnerships and limited liability companies have a right to start and operate businesses, provided they observe safety, environmental and fire protection laws.

Businesses are required to inform the state of their existence for tax purposes. And 11 areas of business — such as weapons manufacturing, production and sales of pharmaceuticals and alcohol, or operation of sea and air transport — will require prior licenses because they involve public safety.

The law on foreign investment combines and replaces two laws that existed earlier, one for investment by foreigners of Polish descent and one for everyone else. In both cases, the rules now make it easier for foreigners to invest in this Eastern European country.

Foreign investors are required to invest a minimum of 20 per cent of the start-up costs of any businesses or joint ventures they form in Poland. The fully or partly foreign-owned business will be subject to a 40 per cent income tax, lower if the company produces for exports.

The new law eliminated previous requirements that majority control and local management be Polish and that the company affiliate with a chamber of commerce for foreigners in Poland.

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World Bank urges Manila to speed up reform

MANILA (R) — Land reform should be speeded up, spending on family planning increased sharply, tax collection improved and the public sector deficit cut to sustain the Philippine economy recovery, the World Bank said in a report.

The bank said the Philippines had staged a remarkable economic recovery after a severe contraction during the final years of ousted leader Ferdinand Marcos when capital fled the country.

It said the government must now tackle problems of deep-rooted poverty, poor productivity and rising population.

In a summary of the report, the bank said real gross national product would grow by 6.0-6.5 per cent this year, roughly in line with official targets.

The report said poverty and unemployment were critical problems and the country's \$28 billion external debt was a significant drag on the economy.

It called on the government of President Corason Aquino to initiate new reforms to reduce fundamental inequalities.

"Public sector revenue performance is poor, and as a result the public sector is unable to provide adequate services to support the recovery or address the poverty problem," the World Bank said.

It praised the Philippines for reforms taken so far which have abolished export taxes on agri-

cultural products, ended agricultural monopolies, simplified the tax system and reformed public investment requirements.

The task now was to make more fundamental reforms in a country where millions live in extreme poverty and there are large inequalities in wealth and land ownership.

"It is critical, therefore, that the government move forward with a new agenda of reforms that goes beyond the removal of price and trade distortions and deals with these more fundamental structural and institutional issues..." it said.

The report said a government programme to provide land for landless farmers should be speeded up and spending on family planning should be expanded significantly to check the rapid population rise and growth in the labour force.

Tax collection should be improved to boost government revenue while the public sector deficit should be reduced.

The bank said the Philippines was well-placed for a period of strong industrial growth and its relatively low labour costs can attract companies from Japan and other countries.

It said investment rules should be changed to give foreign companies more incentives in line with rules in neighbouring countries.

ECONOMIC NEWS BRIEFS

Zalzala urges Arab protectionism

ABU DHABI (R) — Arab states should introduce measures to protect local industries from foreign competition, an Arab League economist has said. Abdul Hassan Zalzala, assistant secretary-general for economic affairs in the League, told Reuters in an interview that Arab states should also set up a common market to match similar moves by other powers. "We are facing an external economic onslaught that threatens our achievements and burgeoning industry," he said. "This should prompt Arab states to erect a customs barrier, and although this could harm Arab consumers, they should make sacrifices until our industries can stand on their feet," Zalzala said. "A common Arab market is feasible and has become a pressing need to immunise the Arab economy against giant world economic blocs and external penetration," said Zalzala.

Oman reports new oil discoveries

NICOSIA (R) — Oman's main oil exploration company has found further oil deposits in several parts of the country, the Oman News Agency has said. Quoting a Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) official, the agency said light oil had been found in a deep formation at the Huwaisah field in the empty quarter: 300 kilometres southwest of Muscat. It said the well, drilled in March and April, was part of a deep drilling programme begun by PDO in north Oman fields after oil was discovered there at low depths at the end of 1986. The Huwaisah field first came onstream in 1971. The agency did not give the size of the new finds and said exploratory drilling was still going on. It said two other wells had been found last month during expansion at the Huwaisah field. PDO also reported a small find at the Mufriq field, 30 kilometres south of Qamr Amar in the central Oman fields. A find was also made in October at Binah near Marmul in the south Oman fields, the agency said without giving any details. PDO, owned 60 per cent by the Omani government and 40 per cent by Shell Petroleum, Total and Parlex, has reported reserves in Oman of more than four billion barrels. Non-OPEC Oman produces about 600,000 barrels per day.

S. American firm to build giant plant

CARACAS (AP) — A Venezuelan-Italian consortium contracted with a Venezuelan construction firm to build what a company official called the largest gasoline additive plant of its kind in the Western hemisphere. Luigi Gasparini, president of Super Octanos, C.A., said that his company signed a contract with Vinceder, C.A., a Venezuelan construction company, to build the plant. Super Octanos is jointly owned by Pequeven, a subsidiary of the state-owned oil company Petroleos De Venezuela, and Ecofuel, a subsidiary of the Italian energy firm ENI. The plant will produce 500,000 tonnes a year of methyl-terbutyl-ether, a gasoline additive designed to raise octane levels, said Gasparini. The new plant, part of Pequeven's new petrochemical complex in Anzoategui state in eastern Venezuela, will be the largest of its kind in the Western hemisphere and the second largest in the world, said Gasparini.

S. Arabia boosts electricity output

RIYADH (OPECNA) — Saudi Arabia increased its power generation from 1,173 MW in 1975 to 14,644 MW by the end of 1987, enabling the kingdom to supply electricity to more than 2,000 factories across the country and thousands of farms, hospitals, schools and other establishments. According to a statistical report by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA), total electricity production rose by 9.4 per cent to 45,866 million kilowatt hours (KWH) in 1986 from 41,904 million KWH in 1985. Over the same period, industrial power consumption registered an increase of 3.2 per cent from 11,656 million KWH to 12,029 million KWH, the report said. SAMA said electricity was being generated by five companies in the central, western, eastern, southern and northern regions. They were also converting saline into drinkable water. The Eastern Province, the agency noted, would remain the largest consumer in the country as most of the kingdom's industrial plants were located there. The province's demand rose to 19,519 million KWH in 1986 from 17,544 KWH in 1985. The agency said the number of electricity subscribers serviced by the companies increased to more than 2.03 million at the end of last year, compared with 351,531 in 1975.

N. Korea to process Iranian zinc, lead

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Iran has signed an agreement with North Korea for the export of 80,000 tons of concentrated lead and 250,000 tons of zinc, reported Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). The agreement signed in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang by Iranian Mines Minister Reza Ayatollahi also envisages the export by Iran to North Korea of 200,000 tons of industrial salts in exchange for 200,000 tons of steel bars and other metallic products, IRNA reported. The agency, which is monitored in Nicosia, said the lead and zinc exports would be returned to Iran after they are transformed into bars.

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Ligachev calls for reform, farming advice from West

MOSCOW (R) — A member of the Soviet Communist Party Politburo has called for urgent farm reform to improve production and distribution and said the country's leadership should seek advice in the West.

Yegor Ligachev, who heads the recently-created Agriculture Commission, was addressing a party meeting after a newspaper reported that meat rationing and restricted butter sales had been imposed across wide parts of the country.

Ligachev, speaking in the southern Russian town of Rostov-On-Don, said urgent measures were required to upgrade rural living standards and make good annual production losses of millions of tonnes of foodstuffs.

"We need radical changes to reduce losses and to improve transportation, roads and food processing," he said in the speech shown on the evening television news.

He said the country should take the experience of the 1930s

when it sent people to study in capitalist countries.

The daily Sovetskaya Rossiya, quoting December figures for the Russian Federation, said a widening gap between growing incomes and the supply of food and consumer goods was sowing discontent and stimulating inflation.

It said meat was being sold by ration coupons in a third of the regions in the Russian Federation, the largest of the Soviet Union's 15 republics and the same had applied to butter sales in areas of southern Russia.

Ligachev, who took over the Agriculture Commission after being moved out of the Politburo's key ideology post in September, acknowledged that rural residents earned far less than city-dwellers.

In recent years, he said, tens of thousands had left the land, particularly in key areas of Russia and the Ukraine.

"The difference in incomes is still enormous," he said of the income gap. "Ideas are now

being put forward to have residents of towns come to live in the countryside."

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev last July outlined a reform programme under which the state would lease land to small groups or families for up to 50 years.

The plan was part of an overhaul of the system to roll back the collectivisation of the 1930s and move farming back to the smaller-scale and cooperative methods of the 1920s.

Ligachev's recent transfer was viewed as a demotion as it appeared he had lost his de facto position as second-in-command to Gorbachev.

Questions have been raised about who is currently responsible for the country's agriculture — Ligachev or Viktor Nikonov, agriculture minister since 1985.

Ligachev has frequently called for caution in approaching Gorbachev's reform programmes and championed a number of orthodox causes in both foreign and domestic policy.

OECD sees strong Greek growth

ATHENS (R) — The Greek economy is at its strongest since 1986 and the pace is set to continue in the next two years, the OECD has predicted.

A semi-annual report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) attributed the rise in productivity to a two-year stabilisation programme begun by the Socialist government of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu in 1985.

Manufacturing output declined 0.8 per cent and 1.6 per cent in 1986 and 1987 but jumped 4.5 per cent in 1988. The OECD expects a rise of 3.25 per cent in 1989 and 2.75 per cent in 1990.

But the state's borrowing requirement, acknowledged by officials in Athens as the major problem facing the economy, is forecast to grow in 1988 to 15 per cent of the gross domestic product. It was 13.5 per cent in 1987.

A 1989 budget, designed to

boost spending on education, health and welfare, forecast a deficit of 1.39 trillion drachmas (\$9.26 billion) compared to 1.16 trillion (\$7.73 billion) for 1988. The budget has passed parliament.

The OECD said inflation was expected to be down slightly in 1988. Finance Minister Dimitris Tsoulas has said it will not exceed 13.5 per cent compared with 15.7 per cent in 1987.

Singapore to diversify markets

SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore is making serious efforts to diversify its markets in an attempt to reduce dependence on rich nations that may turn protectionist, an official report has said.

Last year, trade in the nation's most important commodities, imported crude oil and refined petroleum products, rose 2.5 per cent to 74.7 million tonnes valued at \$11.38 billion, the Trade Development Board said.

This year, trade in those commodities is expected to amount to 90 million tonnes. Currently, between 750,000 to 800,000 barrels of crude oil are refined by five major refineries in Singapore.

Oil imports for refining and bunkering totalled nearly one million barrels per day last year, according to the annual report for the fiscal year ending March 1988.

The report cited strong markets for petroleum products in Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan and Australia, while saying marginal needs in Pakistan, India, Bang-

ladesh and Sri Lanka are also met by Singapore refineries.

But the report added, "protectionist sentiments remained strong in most of Singapore's export markets during the past year."

The United States, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Community remained major markets, accounting for 66.7 per cent of Singapore's total exports, the board said.

It said total two-way trade rose 23 per cent to \$66.15 billion last year. Non-oil domestic exports increased by 36 per cent to \$13.84 billion, while imports moved up 23 per cent to \$34.87 billion in 1987.

Singapore wants to dilute dependence on rich nations and also on Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Brunei in order to avoid sluggish growth due to economic stagnation or protectionist measures in these countries, it said.

Exports of computer compo-

nents and electronic parts to the United States rose 28 per cent to \$7.69 billion last year.

Exports of refined petroleum products, telecommunication equipment, office machine parts and components of electronic products to ASEAN rose 26.2 per cent to \$6.66 billion.

South East Asia, though important, is also becoming a crowded and fiercely competitive market in trade and investment opportunities.

Meanwhile, Singapore hopes to enhance trade with countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China in northeast Asia. It also is serious about business opportunities in south Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Gain in these countries would mean a diversion in trade from protectionist markets, as Singapore seeks to widen its markets and not eliminate trade with the rich nations that provide the bulk of foreign investment, management and technology.

Indian farmers declare insolvency

BOMBAY (R) — Half a million indebted Indian farmers have filed for insolvency in an unprecedented campaign to publicise their plight.

The "Freedom from Debt" movement was started in April in Maharashtra state in western India. Farmers' leaders say it is spreading like wildfire across the country.

"We want the farmers to have the moral courage to say that they cannot repay the loans they have taken from banks and cooperatives," said Sharad Joshi, founder and leader of Shetkari Sanghatana (farmers' movement).

According to Joshi, the number of insolvency suits filed by the farmers — most of them poor with small holdings — has reached 500,000 in Maharashtra and is expected to double early next year.

"A million suits, highlighting the farmers' perpetual indebtedness, will force the powers-that-be to sit up and think and find a lasting solution," Joshi said.

According to Sanghatana, the accumulated debt of farmers in Maharashtra is about 6.5 billion rupees (\$435 million) out of a total of 120 billion (\$8 billion) for India's entire farming community.

Sanghatana has been fighting for farmers' rights since it was founded in 1978 by Joshi, 54, who gave up a well-paid government job to become a farmer.

Since it launched its first agitation in 1980, Sanghatana has secured higher prices for farm produce such as onions, sugarcane, cotton and tobacco.

As more and more farmers filed insolvency applications in Maharashtra, the state government last month tried to pre-empt Joshi's movement by waiving agricultural loans totalling 2.17 billion rupees (\$145 million).

This brought a stiff warning from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the country's central bank.

"Generalised write-off of dues encourages wilful defaulters to the detriment of the large body of borrowers," RBI Governor R.N. Malhotra said in Bombay, the capital of Maharashtra.

Surprisingly, Joshi supported the RBI stand.

"I am against the writing-off of loans because it affects the sanctity of credit and contract between lenders and borrowers," Joshi said.

"What we are trying to do is to find a solution within the system by taking recourse to the insolvency act," he noted.

The act, passed during British rule of India which ended in 1947, protects the debtor from attempts by creditors to recover loans by seizure of property or land.

The movement attracted nationwide notice last month at Kolhapur, a small town in Maharashtra, where more than 200,000

farmers gathered to file insolvency petitions and publicly declare themselves bankrupt.

Joshi said the "Freedom from Debt" movement was also spreading in other states and by the end of next year about 10 million farmers would have filed insolvency suits.

"With about 10 million insolvency petitions filed in courts across India, the government cannot afford to continue with its anti-farmer policies," Joshi said.

"The prices of agricultural inputs and produce are fixed by the government and the cost of production is far higher than the returns for most agricultural commodities," he said.

Most farmers believe their fight in the courts will be a long drawn out affair but are convinced there is no alternative.

Ramrao Hambarde, 68, one of those who filed at Kolhapur, rues the day he took a loan from a cooperative bank.

Six years later, he has been able to repay only 4,000 rupees (\$265) out of the 10,000 rupees (\$670) he borrowed.

Tulsiram Bobde, 75, who also declared himself insolvent, summed up the farmers' plight.

"When there is a drought, which is frequent, there are no crops. When there are good crops after good rains, there are few takers and prices are too low," he said.

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AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES					
Monday Dec. 26, 1988 Central Bank official rates					
	Buy	Sell		Buy	Sell
U.S. dollar	475.0	477.0	French franc	78.6	79.0
Pound Sterling	855.8	860.1	Japanese yen (for 100)	380.7	382.6
Deutsche mark	268.0	269.3	Dutch guilder	277.0	278.2
Swiss franc	317.9	319.5	Swedish crown	77.4	77.8
			Italian lira (for 100)	36.4	36.6
			Belgian franc (for 100)	127.6	128.2

NBA STANDINGS

Eastern Conference									
Atlantic Division									
	W	L	Pct	GB	Streak	Home	Away	Conf.	
New York	18	7	.720	—	won 2	12-4	6-6	12-4	
Philadelphia	15	11	.577	3 1/2	won 1	12-4	5-7	11-9	
Boston	12	12	.500	5 1/2	lost 1	10-5	2-7	8-12	
New Jersey	11	15	.423	7 1/2	won 2	6-8	5-7	7-10	
Charlotte	7	17	.292	10 1/2	won 1	6-6	1-11	4-14	
Washington	6	17	.261	11	lost 2	4-5	2-12	5-11	
Central Division									
Cleveland	18	5	.783	—	won 5	10-2	8-3	11-3	
Detroit	18	7	.720	1	lost 1	8-2	10-5	13-6	
Atlanta	17	9	.654	2 1/2	won 2	12-2	5-7	12-5	
Milwaukee	14	10	.583	4 1/2	won 3	9-4	5-6	10-10	
Chicago	13	11	.542	5 1/2	lost 1	8-2	5-9	9-7	
Indiana	5	19	.208	13 1/2	lost 5	5-7	0-12	3-14	
Western Conference									
Midwest Division									
Houston	16	9	.640	—	won 4	13-3	3-6	12-8	
Dallas	15	9	.625	1/2	lost 2	9-6	6-3	11-3	
Denver	15	11	.577	1 1/2	won 3	11-3	4-8	11-8	
Utah	15	12	.556	2	won 1	11-2	4-10	11-8	
San Antonio	7	17	.292	8 1/2	lost 1	6-7	1-10	5-13	
Miami	2	21	.087	13	won 1	1-11	1-10	2-15	
Pacific Division									
L.A. Lakers	17	9	.654	—	lost 1	8-0	9-9	12-3	
Portland	16	10	.615	1	won 4	11-1	5-9	13-6	
Phoenix	14	10	.583	2	won 3	11-2	5-8	12-8	
Seattle	13	11	.542	3	lost 1	8-3	5-8	13-9	
Golden State	10	14	.417	6	lost 2	6-4	4-11	7-12	
L.A. Clippers	9	17	.346	8	won 1	7-4	2-13	6-13	
Sacramento	5	18	.217	10 1/2	lost 4	4-6	1-12	4-13	

Jordan Times
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GOREN BRIDGE

BY CHARLES GOREN
AND OMAR SHARIF
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TAKE TEN!

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ K 9 5
♥ J 7 2
♦ A Q 10 7 6 5 3
♣ A Q 10 7 6 5 3

EAST
♠ Q J 4
♥ A Q 9 6
♦ 6 4 3
♣ J 9 8

SOUTH
♠ A K 10
♥ 10 8 5
♦ A K Q J 10 7 5
♣ K

The bidding:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass
3 NT Pass 4 ♠ Pass

Opening lead: Eight of ♠

We are indebted to our good friend Dr. George Rosenkranz of Mexico City for this amusing hand.

It was played in Flight B of the Mexican National Pairs Championship, and highlights a point we have

been making in this column: No matter how bad your contract, try to find a

line of the cards that will permit you to bring it home.

For a brief moment North-South were in their only makeable game—

three no trump. However, South had slam ambitions and tried a cue-bid of four spades. North decided it was a natural bid, and so an "im-

possible" contract was reached.

Since he expected the king of hearts to be in dummy and South to be short in that suit, West decided not to attack with a heart. Instead, he chose what should have been the

disastrous opening lead of a club. But again, when he had to play the hand, declarer bungled his way to

down two.

Let's look at what could have happened had declarer kept his cool. He wins the opening lead in

hand and cashes three high diamonds, discarding three hearts from dummy. When the third diamond

falls, a heart ruff is the entry to the table to cash the ace of clubs. When that holds and East discards a heart on the low club continuation, declarer is virtually home. He ruffs with the ten of trumps, scores an

ace heart ruff on the board, ruffs a club in hand with the ace of trumps and he already has nine

tricks—three diamonds, two clubs, two heart ruffs in dummy and two

club ruffs in hand. And the king of trumps on the table reigns supreme as the 10th trick.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Segregated skiing opens in Iran

NICOSIA (AP) — Four slopes for men and two for women are open in the ski resort of Dizin in the mountains north of Tehran, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported Sunday. Iran's government interprets Islamic Law as dictating the strict segregation of the sexes in public activities where women are not veiled. IRNA, monitored in Nicosia, also said the resort of Shemshak was opened following sufficient snowfall in recent weeks. Both resorts are about 45 kilometers north of the capital Tehran, which had its first snowfall Sunday.

Phillips will try to equal 1989 success

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Andre Phillips may never equal his memorable year of 1988, when he finally beat Edwin Moses and collected an Olympic gold medal in the process. But he's going to try. "I'm going to go after the world record ... I'm still hungry," said Phillips, who won the 400-metre hurdles at Seoul.

Paris-Dakar rally reaches Spain

BARCELONA (AP) — The arrival of competitors in the 11th Paris-Dakar rally created traffic jams in Barcelona Sunday night. Thousands of people crowded the city streets to see the 241 cars and 155 motorcycles arrive from Paris in the first leg of the gruelling rally.

The competitors covered the 1,200 kilometres between Paris and Barcelona accompanied by 76 support trucks. The Spanish news agency EFE said French motorcycle rider Rene Fieffe was hospitalized with a broken leg after his bike went off the road in central France.

The first competitor to cross the Barcelona finish line at Moll de la Fusta was Italian motorcycle

list David Apoline, officials said. The prologue, the rally's official start, will be run around a Barcelona circuit Monday. The competitors will cover a course of more than 6 kilometres.

After this prologue in Barcelona, the competitors will cross the Mediterranean sea to Tunisia in a ferry to start the next leg in Tunisia Dec. 28.

The rally will take competitors through rough and sandy terrain of Tunisia, Libya, Niger, Mali, Guinea and Senegal, a total of 10,800 kilometres before reaching the beaches of Dakar Jan. 13.

Only a portion of the vehicles was expected to complete the trek.

Marwood sends Arsenal to the top

LONDON (R) — Two goals by New England striker Brian Marwood gave Arsenal a 3-2 away victory over Charlton and sent them to the top of the English First Division Monday.

After converting a penalty in the first half, Marwood appeared to have clinched Arsenal's win with his second 13 minutes from the end as four goals came in a hectic 10-minute spell.

With Norwich not playing until Tuesday, Arsenal needed a win to replace them as leaders and they looked to have the match sewn up after Paul Merson had put them two ahead in the 73rd minute.

However, goal awoke Charlton from their festive torpor and they struck back through Steve Mackenzie before Marwood hit home a rebound from the post to restore the two-goal margin.

Charlton were still not finished and Mackenzie rammed home a great second goal to close the gap again seven minutes from the end.

But Arsenal clung on to their lead through the feverish closing minutes to take their tally to 34 points from 17 matches, one ahead of Norwich who entertain bottom-of-the-table West Ham Tuesday.

Rapidly improving London neighbours Tottenham missed a 20th-minute penalty as they allowed visitors Luton to take a point in a goalless draw.

Tottenham dominated an entertaining match but wasted numerous chances to secure their third successive league victory

and move into the top half of the table after being at the bottom only a few weeks ago.

Their worst culprit was defender Terry Fenwick, who saw Luton goalkeeper Les Sealey save his spot kick after Steve Foster had pushed Paul Walsh.

Fenwick had the chance to make amends after Sealey had parried a shot from Paul Stewart but he managed only to scoop the ball over the bar.

Paul Gascoigne and Walsh both had shots cleared off the line in the first half but Luton also went close just before the interval when goalkeeper Bobby Mimms deflected a Roy Wegerle shot onto the bar and then saved well with his legs from Ricky Hill.

Luton's goal continued to lead a charmed life after the break. Stewart hit a post, Mitchell Thomas had a header cleared off the line and then Paul Allen headed wide from a Walsh cross.

Milwall, lying third before the start of Monday's games, lost the chance to close on the league leaders when they were beaten for the third time in four matches, 1-0 away to Wimbledon.

Carlton Fairweather swivelled to fire home in the 53rd minute after man-of-the-match Terry Gibson had a shot blocked on the line.

Oilers defeat Browns

CLEVELAND (AP) — The football season ended the way it began for the Cleveland Browns, with yet another quarterback being carted off for X-rays.

It was continued for the Houston Oilers because they played Saturday precisely the way they've played all season — mean.

The Oilers, who led the American Football Conference in penalties this year, were penalized 13 times for 118 yards as they beat the Browns 24-23 in the AFC wild-card game. Houston now travels to Buffalo for a divisional playoff next weekend.

"This is the third time we've played the Browns this year," the Oilers' Warren Moon said. "There's not a whole lot you can do to fool each other. It's just a matter of who hits the hardest and who's going to be the toughest football team. There was a lot

of talking. There was a lot of intimidation."

Houston had lost to the Browns 28-23 in the regular-season finale six days earlier. Cleveland had lost to the Oilers 24-17 in Houston on Nov. 7.

The turning point Saturday came early. Houston led 7-3 after moon hit Allen Pinkett with a 14-yard touchdown pass seven seconds into the second quarter. Don Strock, starting because Bernie Kosar had a sprained knee, then fumbled the snap on the Browns' next play from scrimmage, and Richard Byrd recovered for the Oilers.

One play later, Pinkett ran 16 yards around the left side for his second touchdown in 15 seconds.

Strock, meanwhile, was taken to the locker room for X-rays on his right wrist. No fracture was found, but the wrist was sprained. Strock was replaced by Mike Pagel, back from a separated shoulder. It was the fifth time Cleveland was forced to change quarterbacks during a game this year.

"The name of this game is, find a way to win," said Browns' Coach Marty Schottenheimer, who has taken his team to the playoffs four straight years, only to be disappointed each time. "When it's all said and done and everybody looks back on it, nobody cares if you had people hurt, and that's as it should be. It is still a team sport."

High noon for cricket over South Africa

By Dave Thompson
Reuter

LONDON — Cricket's high noon arrives in four weeks. Delegates from the 25 countries which make up the International Cricket Conference (ICC) must decide once and for all what to do about players with South African connections.

Pessimists fear the game may split forever along the black/white divide. Optimists hope for a solution which will do the least damage to the sport.

Recent omens are not good. The England tour of India aborted over the Indian government's refusal to issue visas to eight players, including Captain Graham Gooch, who had coached or played in South Africa.

A substitute tour of New Zealand was arranged for the same English team, but was called off. The cancellation followed Pakistan's withdrawal from a one-day tournament with New Zealand and England, in protest at the English players with South African links.

At the heart of the problem are the 60 or 70 English professionals who regularly coach or play in South Africa to boost their income.

At the Jan. 23-24 ICC meeting, the West Indies still have on the table their original resolution which would ban all such players from test cricket.

But the choice looks to be between two other resolutions. One, proposed by Australia, says that if a host country finds any player unacceptable the visiting team may replace him.

The other option, a softer version of the West Indies' original resolution, but still an uncomfortable choice for others, says the visiting country shall replace offending players.

D'Oliveira affair

All the resolutions fly in the face of the long-held English Test and County Cricket Board (CCB) position, enshrined in the Basil D'Oliveira affair of 1968-69, that selectors must be free to pick who they want. On top of that the Cricketers' Association in England argue they must be free to pursue their trade wherever they wish.

If the CCB steadfastly hold to their principle that they cannot accept compulsory team vetting, they would face the prospect of having to pull out of the ICC, possibly bringing Australia and New Zealand with them.

The black/white split so long feared would be a reality.

However, Gooch and former England captain John Emburey believe the CCB will have to give in.

Both men were banned from international cricket for three years for

taking part in a rebel English tour in 1982, and Gooch has also played provincial cricket in the republic.

Emburey said: "I think our board will go in strongly but they could come under great pressure, get out-voted on everything and have to tow the line."

"Even if there is a firm rule concerning players with South African links that is no guarantee of a trouble free future. The cricket boards of West Indies, Pakistan and India might agree to a touring party but who is to say that their governments won't then intervene and drag up old issues."

Gooch said: "Governments issue visas, not cricket boards. It seems to me that the ICC meeting will decide that any player who coaches or plays in South Africa in future will run the risk of being banned from most, if not all, test cricket."

Banning risk

"But if that happens, who is to say governments won't still hark back to past events. What is to say anything will change?" Gooch, 35, added: "It wouldn't affect older players like myself so much because we could make our minds up depending on the circumstances at the time."

"But every young player in this country dreams of representing England and they are not going to risk being banned from the test cricket by going to South Africa."

The vexed question occupies seven pages in the latest issue of The Cricketer, the world's largest-selling cricket magazine.

Geoff Cook, chairman of the Cricketers' Association, fears the meeting will vote for the "shall" resolution.

But even if the CCB stood by its no vetting principle and went it alone, that would not help the cricketers in the long term because at least 45 per cent of English countries' income comes from cash the TCCB receives via international cricket.

Former Pakistan captain Imran Khan has put forward a compromise whereby once a player is selected to play for England he should sever all links with South Africa.

Joe Parnesky, president of the South African Cricket Union (SACU) says in The Cricketer the presence of coaches ensures the rapid growth of cricket in black areas is maintained.

Whatever the rights or wrongs, after two unsuccessful attempts to resolve the question, most observers hope one of modern cricket's most contentious issues will finally be settled here next month.



معرض اللوحات الفنية للفنان الأردني

فاروق لمبز

قاعة جاليري عالية للفنون التشكيلية - جبل عمان - الدوار الاول
١٣ كانون اول ١٩٨٨ - ٥ كانون ثاني ١٩٨٩

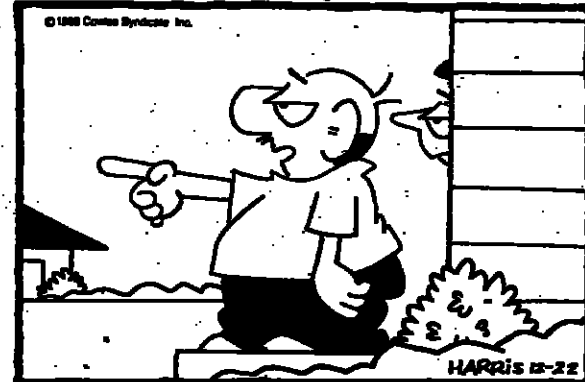
AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS BY THE
JORDANIAN ARTIST

FAROUK LAMBAZ

AT ALIA ART GALLERY - JABAL AMMAN, 1st CIRCLE
23 DEC. 1988 - 5 JAN. 1989

THE BETTER HALF.

By Harris



"Here comes the mailman driving a forklift — must be delivering your mom's fruitcake."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

VERPO
HEEPS
FUNIES
CIAMAN



WHAT AN EMPLOYEE HAS IF HE LAUGHS AT THE BOSS'S JOKES EVEN WHEN THEY MAKE NO SENSE.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: " " " " " "

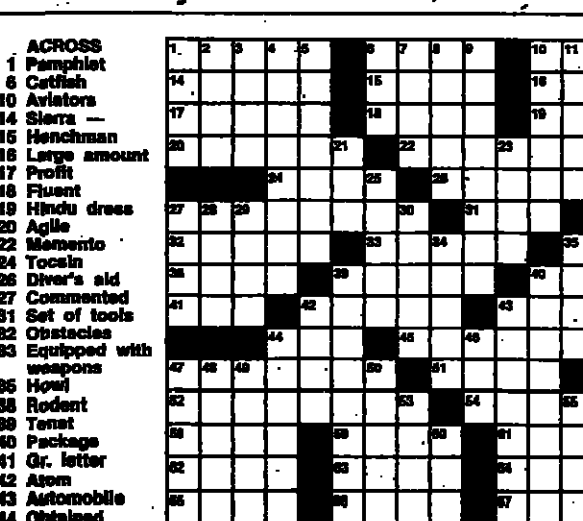
Yesterday's Jumbles: NEEDY BARON SECIDE ELDEST
Answer: The judge's words were less important than this — HIS SENTENCES

HOROSCOPE NOT

RECEIVED

THE Daily Crossword

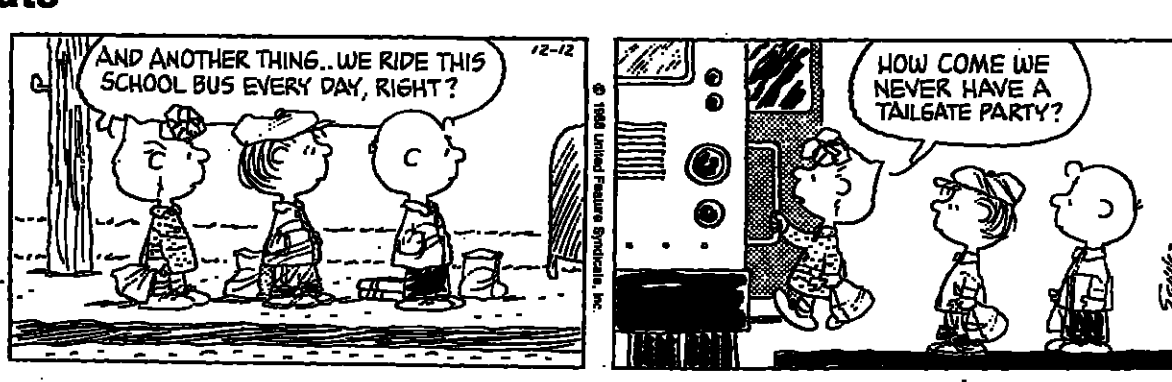
by Florence C. Adler



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- ACROSS
- 1 Pamphlet
 - 6 Catfish
 - 10 Arletton
 - 14 Sierra
 - 15 Henchman
 - 18 Large amount
 - 17 Profit
 - 18 Fluent
 - 19 Hindu dress
 - 20 Agile
 - 22 Memento
 - 24 Tocsin
 - 26 Diver's aid
 - 27 Commented
 - 31 Set of tools
 - 32 Obstacles
 - 33 Equipped with weapons
 - 35 Howl
 - 36 Rodent
 - 38 Tensat
 - 40 Package
 - 41 Gr. letter
 - 42 Atom
 - 43 Automobile
 - 44 Obtained
 - 46 Wielder
 - 47 Esoteric
 - 51 Egypt, sacred bull
 - 52 Protective glove
 - 54 Make a choice of
 - 58 Peel
 - 59 Gilt
 - 61 — donna
 - 62 Punta del
 - 63 Glacial ridges
 - 64 Root
 - 65 Exchange
 - 66 Hardy heroine
 - 68 Slough Wolves
 - 67 Pipequack
- DOWN
- 1 Gnat, agent
 - 2 Starlet
 - 3 Shanker
 - 5 Sed's
 - 6 Card game
 - 8 Bank employees
 - 9 Shred
 - 7 Brothers
 - 8 Good-bye, amigo
 - 9 Showed up
 - 10 Declare
 - 11 Metallic sound
 - 12 Spooky
 - 13 Eddy
 - 21 Moose
 - 23 Cancel
 - 25 Memorize
 - 27 Invitation letters
 - 28 Seth's son
 - 29 Afr. land
 - 30 Fantasy
 - 34 Jason's wife
 - 35 Commanded
 - 36 Winged
 - 37 Longings
 - 38 Ballroom dance, var.
 - 40 Mattress
 - 42 Stuffing once
 - 43 Famed suffragette
 - 43 Sorap
 - 44 Sacred Ind. river
 - 46 Phil. volcano
 - 48 Heron
 - 48 Hoist
 - 49 Stunted animals
 - 50 Deelst
 - 53 Oppressor
 - 55 Cinque
 - 56 Heb. measure
 - 57 Grate
 - 60 Broadway sign

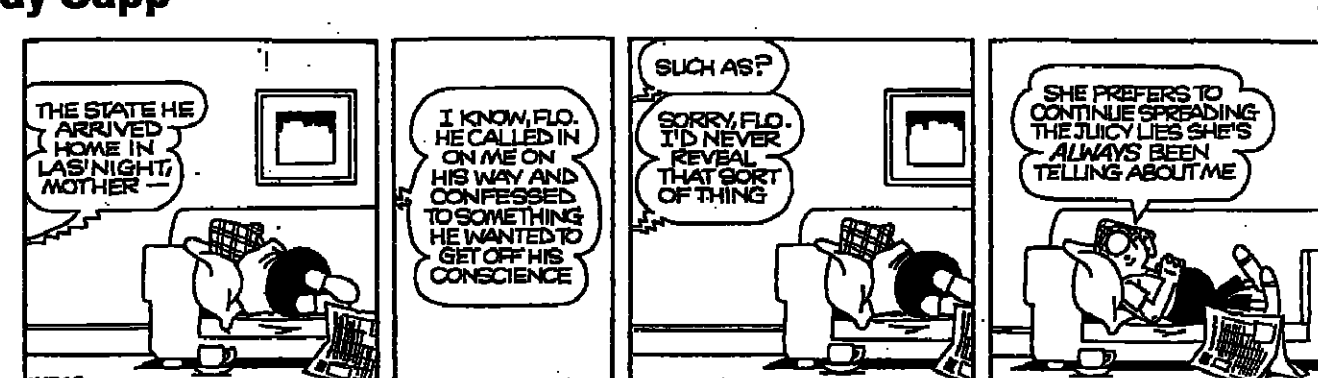
Peanuts



Mutt'n' Jeff



Andy Capp



Pravda: Soviet 'mafia' behind ethnic dispute

MOSCOW (R) — The Communist Party daily Pravda said Monday a Soviet "mafia" had fomented recent unrest in the south of the country to protect privileges it said were threatened by Kremlin leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms.

Pravda said investigators had been on the verge of unmasking a web of groups trying to destabilize the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan when the latest wave of violence erupted last month.

More than 60 have died since February in violence focusing on the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Tens of thousands have fled their homes — complicating rescue efforts following this month's earthquake in Armenia.

Pravda, reprinting recent articles from Armenian and Azerbaijani newspapers, said "corrupt clans" and "bosses of the black economy" had joined forces to derail Gorbachev's perestroika programme to reform and modernise Soviet society.

"What should be noted is their organisation, unity and thought-out nature, making use of bribes to unstable, backward, unbridled

and parasitical elements," it said. "In other words, what we have here is our own sort of mafia — one of the forms of organised criminal activity."

Pravda said legal specialists sent to Azerbaijan after the initial unrest in February had been about to uncover "ties leading to the mafia nerve centre" when fresh violence erupted.

"Instead of undoing the web, these qualified jurists had to deal with fighting, robberies and pogroms which took place on the same days as illegal meetings," it said.

At the height of the latest unrest, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in the centre of the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, in violation of a curfew and a ban on public gatherings. Curfews and special regulations remain in force in many parts of both republics.



Azerbaijanis demonstrate in their capital of Baku against Armenian demands for the reunification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia (Sygma photo)

The article accused the media of gross errors in disseminating inflammatory stories and recalled that editors of two youth newspapers in Azerbaijan had been dismissed.

It also said intellectuals had done nothing to calm passions, particularly during unrest in Baku on December 5.

"Were they watching indifferently when groups of unbridled young people were breaking windows of houses and shops, sacking enterprises, overturning and setting fire to cars and beating drivers and passengers in

buses and taxis?" it said.

Pravda said that more than 200 Communist Party members in Azerbaijan had been disciplined, and that measures had been adopted to "strengthen the links" of public bodies — an indication of large-scale dismissals.

Nagorno-Karabakh is populated mainly by Armenians but administered by Azerbaijan, which has rejected the territory's request to be transferred to Armenia. The Kremlin has ruled out any boundary changes.

A Communist Party commission is currently examining the

dispute, which has spilled over into almost all aspects of Soviet public life in recent months.

Armenian and Azeri leaders engaged in slanging matches at this month's session of the Soviet parliament, prompting senior leaders to call both republics to order.

Gorbachev, during his tour of earthquake-stricken areas, denounced as "power seekers" Armenians who continued to seek the return of the territory despite the earthquake which killed an estimated 55,000 people.

Chinese-African clash reported in East China

PEKING (R) — Crowds of angry Chinese chanting "kill them" attacked black African students at three East China colleges, forcing more than 130 of them to flee to safety, Western eyewitnesses said.

The eyewitnesses told Reuters by telephone Monday that two black students were in hospital after Chinese beat Africans studying at Hehai University in Nanking Sunday.

The incident was the worst flare-up of racial tension in Chinese universities in the past three years.

The official New China News Agency (NCNA) earlier reported African students at Hehai University had attacked university employees Saturday.

It said two African students refused to register two young Chinese women at a university dance and were barred by university employees. The students, joined by others, attacked the employees, the agency said.

The agency said two African students and 11 university employees were hurt, one seriously.

About 135 Africans had fled their dormitories and were camping out at Nanking railway station, hoping to reach the safety of Peking, where their countries have embassies.

Some 200 police were barring them from leaving the city, the witnesses said.

In the worst incident, some 2,000 to 3,000 Chinese students threw stones and bottles, smashing windows at the foreign students' dormitories at Hehai University Sunday. Some Africans took refuge in the upper floors.

"They (the Chinese) smashed television sets, stereos and anything else they could find in the halls," said Mark Newell, an American from the University of California at Irvine, who is studying Chinese at Nanking University. The dormitories were ransacked.

Another American said he saw one African bleeding from the mouth Sunday and that police stood by but did not intervene for several hours.

A similar incident involving about two hundred people occurred at Hehai Saturday night. American students said stone-throwing incidents involving several hundred Chinese took place at Nanking Technical Institute Sunday and at Nanking University Monday.

They said racial tension had been high at Hehai University in recent months after authorities tried to build a wall around the African dormitory to control those who entered and left, especially Chinese women.

A Nanking municipal foreign affairs official said later on Monday, "the situation is now normal."

COLUMN

Nearly 700 plant species at risk

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 700 native U.S. plant species are threatened with extinction by the year 2000, most of them in southern and subtropical regions with booming populations or economies, a private study says. The Centre for Plant Conservation said it found 253 species of plant may become extinct within five years and another 427 may vanish by the turn of the century. As many as 52 of the plant species may already be extinct in the wild. Seventy-three per cent of the most critically endangered plants are found in Hawaii, California, Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, according to the centre, a consortium of 19 botanical gardens and arboreta based in Massachusetts. "What we're dealing with here is just another sign of a planet in trouble and indeed, a national environment in trouble," said Thomas Lovejoy, an expert on tropical rainforests at Washington's Smithsonian Institution. Experts generally agree that about 200 plant species have become extinct in the past two centuries. Conservationists worry that the rate may accelerate as population and economic growth jeopardise plant habitat. A 1973 study by the Smithsonian found that 3,000 of the nation's 25,000 species are endangered.

Police hold Pan Am looting suspect

LOCKERBIE, Scotland (R) — A man was held Monday by police investigating allegations of looting from victims of the Pan Am Boeing 747 that crashed on the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing up to 269 people.

The 28-year-old man, who was not named, was expected to appear in court in nearby Dumfries Wednesday.

Police spokesman Angus Kennedy said a criminal investigation was in progress: "We are following a definite line of enquiry."

The Sun newspaper said scavengers had gone to wreckage sites at night, searching for rings, jewellery and cash.

So far, 239 bodies have been recovered from in and around Lockerbie and brought to makeshift mortuaries in the town hall and an ice-skating rink.

All 258 on board Pan Am Flight 103 died and 11 local people are missing, presumed dead.

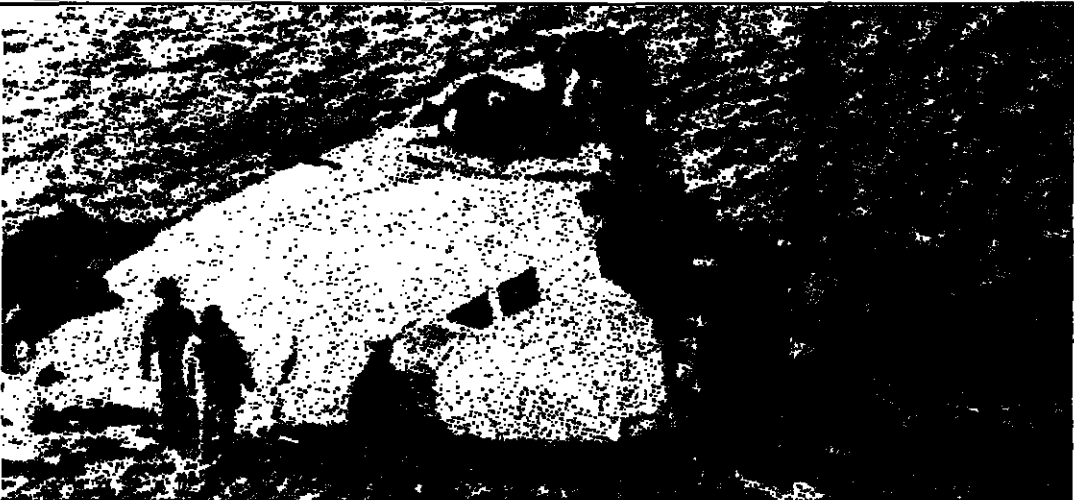
Victims' belongings recovered by search teams are stored in a converted chemical factory.

The Sun quoted a 17-year-old local mechanic, Gordon Lockhart, as saying: "I saw one looter trying to pull a ring off the finger of a hand. Others were sifting through battered briefcases for passports, money and travellers cheques."

Police have sealed off the main crash areas overnight but the wreckage is strewn over a wide area. Pieces of the jet can be seen littering the hillsides around Lockerbie and the search has been extended to cover an area of about 250 square kilometres.

Army cook George Brighton, 18, was quoted as saying he had seen looters creeping into the huge crater at Sherwood Crescent in Lockerbie, where a large chunk of wreckage fell destroying several houses.

"People with torches (flashlights) were wading through the mud. They were looking for rings and watches," he was quoted as saying.



Police and rescue workers survey the cockpit of the Pan Am jet that crashed in Scotland Wednesday

The search for the missing bodies and wreckage entered its fifth day with still no official word on the cause of the crash, thought to have been either a bomb or a massive structural failure.

"It's too early. There's nothing to say," Kennedy said when asked if crash investigators had any progress to report.

The Times newspaper quoted former Chief Inspector of Air Accidents William Trench as saying he now tended towards

the view that the disaster was due to structural failure.

He said structural failure could have occurred to the rear of the cockpit, which fragmented so much it was unreasonable to expect a detailed examination.

"I am still not dissuaded from the view that structural failure, dissociated from a bomb, is the basic cause of the accident," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Police say they plan to recover

all the bodies if possible but had weather on Christmas day meant helicopters were grounded and no bodies were found.

So far about 90 mostly American relatives of the dead have visited Lockerbie and groups have been taken to see the main crash sites.

Some attended Christmas church services in the town, where prayers were offered for the crash victims.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

New York murder toll highest in history

NEW YORK (R) — A rash of at least 16 Christmas holiday killings has made 1988 the bloodiest year in New York's history with 1,846 homicides to date, police said Sunday. Four people were killed on Christmas morning, bringing the number of recorded killings since Friday to 16. The previous record for homicides in the city was set in 1981 when 1,841 people were killed, a police spokesman said. "As of right now we have a total of 1,846," he said. The potent cocaine derivative known as "crack" has been singled out as a driving force behind the dramatic upsurge in violent crime in New York. "It's definitely drugs," said officer Kevin Hayes of Brooklyn's 75th precinct, the city's bloodiest with 104 reported homicides this year.

Tower hints at cutback in manpower

NEW YORK (R) — John Tower, who takes over as secretary of defence January 20, has hinted that U.S. military manpower might be cut rather than arms to meet budget restraints. "The big cost is not in the hardware, the big cost is on personnel," Tower said in an interview on CBS Television's "Face the Nation" programme. "Fifty per cent of our (defence) budget goes for people," he said. "Hopefully by going to less manpower-intensive systems we can make some economies." The Pentagon's \$300 billion yearly spending is expected to come under major pressure from Congress as the United States struggles to overcome a \$155 billion federal budget deficit. Tower, a staunch conservative, appeared to rule out any deep cuts in the U.S. stockpile of arms and military hardware as part of the next administration's effort to trim the U.S. budget deficit.

Yugoslav dissident ends fast

BELGRADE (R) — One of Yugoslavia's best-known human rights campaigners, Dobroslav Paraga, has ended a 17-day hunger strike after authorities promised to give him a passport. Paraga, 27, told Reuters Monday he ended the fast Saturday. He started the protest in the northwest city of Ljubljana after he was refused a passport to travel to West Germany for celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights. Slovenian and Serbian intellectuals also organised protests to support him. Paraga said Janez Stanovnik, president of the Yugoslav republic Slovenia, where Paraga lives, had said the authorities would give him a passport soon. Paraga's cause was also taken up by Cardinal Franjo Kuharic, head of the Catholic church in Yugoslavia's republic of Croatia. Paraga's family home.

11 blacks killed in S. African unrest

JOHANNESBURG (R) — Eleven black South Africans were killed in political and factional violence Sunday, police said Monday. In routine reports on political unrest, they said seven men died in fighting and knife attacks around Pietermaritzburg, the capital of Natal province. Two black men were killed in an apparent faction fight at Kokstad, a small town in the south of Natal province. In Ciskei, one of South Africa's four nominally independent black homelands, two black women were shot dead in an attack apparently aimed against a black civil rights lawyer. A witness told reporters in East London that the women, a teacher and a nurse, were sitting with lawyer Hintsia Swisa in a parked car when a gunman drove up, opened fire and sped off. Swisa, a former official of the banned United Democratic Front (UDF), was treated in hospital for a bullet wound in the upper arm.

Mandela spends Christmas in heavily guarded 'golden cell'

CAPE TOWN (R) — Jailed black nationalist Nelson Mandela, 70, received a brief visit from his wife, daughter and grandchildren as he spent Christmas in the lonely prison villa where the South African government now keeps him.

His wife Winnie Mandela, daughter Zindzi and three grandchildren spent 80 minutes with Mandela and handed over some small gifts with a cake iced in the colours of his African National Congress (ANC) for prison officials to pass on to him.

Although Mandela has been placed in more comfortable surroundings since he caught tuberculosis in Pollsmoor prison this year and was treated in hospital, he and his family have spurned Pretoria's offer of extended visiting rights.

"We will decline all privileges that are not extended to other political prisoners — men who are in jail for the same reason as Mr. Mandela," his wife told reporters last week before flying to Cape Town from Johannesburg.

ANC leader Mandela has

served more than 26 years in high-security prisons for plotting to overthrow white rule.

Winnie Mandela said nothing to reporters after her Christmas visit to the heavily-guarded bungalow, with swimming pool, set among guards' homes in the Victor Verster prison in the town of Paarl.

However, she earlier told the Johannesburg Sunday Times he had been finding the isolation of his new quarters hard to bear when she first visited him there earlier this month.

"Mr. Mandela has over the years never shown any emotions about his situation because it is a national situation. But that day I saw decades of solitude welling up on his face," the newspaper quoted her as saying.

"When he was at Pollsmoor prison he knew that his comrades were within reach. On the floor above or the room next door he knew there were men who shared his views. Now he is in his golden cell all by himself," she said in an interview.

The move to the bungalow has

been widely seen as a step in a government strategy of freeing Mandela in gradual stages so it can monitor and control the impact of releasing the world's most famous political prisoner.

In the interview, however, Mrs. Mandela dubbed it "a sarcastic version of imprisonment."

Despite the continued jailing of Mandela and many other activists, the people of the black townships celebrated openly and enthusiastically for the first time Sunday, after 12 "black Christmas" in which anti-apartheid groups halted festivities.

This year black leaders urged people to have fun, eat well and exchange gifts. At midnight Soweto and other townships around Johannesburg exploded with the sound of car horns and fireworks.

Residents in the new black suburb of Springsburg, northeast of Johannesburg, said they braved rainstorms to gather for community barbecues at Christmas, for the first time since their homes were built.

12 killed in fresh Sri Lankan outburst

COLOMBO (AP) — Paramilitary forces killed 12 Sinhalese just hours after anti-government militants raided a tea plantation and set fire to 10 Tamil homes, according to police.

It was the worst burst of violence since Prime Minister Rana-singhe Premadasa was elected president in the Dec. 19 election.

Premadasa, a Sinhalese, had said his victory would help curb ethnic violence on this Indian Ocean island, particularly by the People's Liberation Front, an extremist Sinhalese group that opposes the government's peace overtures to the minority Tamils.

A police spokesman said a group of Sinhalese extremists raided a tea plantation in Matale Saturday and torched 10 Tamil homes. More than 300 other Tamils fled the estate after the attack and sought refuge in a Hindu temple in Matale, about 100 kilometres north of Colombo, according to the spokesman, who did not want to be identified.

Later in the day, members of the People's Revolutionary Red Army retaliated by killing 12 Sinhalese men in separate attacks in the southern towns of Hakma-

na, Wellawaya and Akuressa, the spokesman said.

The victims were all members of the front, he said.

The People's Revolutionary Red Army, comprised mainly of members of paramilitary forces, has blamed the front for the murders of 900 government supporters and security personnel in the past 17 months.

Tamils make up 18 per cent of the island's 16 million people and say they are denied jobs and education by the predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese, who comprise 75 per cent of the population.

Moderate Tamils have been demanding self-rule in the northern and eastern provinces, while Tamil extremists have been waging a guerrilla war to carve out a separate Tamil homeland. More than 8,500 people have died in the fighting.

The People's Liberation Front, on the other hand, abhor a peace accord signed in July 1987 aimed at ending the five-year-old Tamil insurgency. The front contends the government granted too many concessions by offering limited autonomy to the Tamils.

Son tries to do what father could not

ANAHEIM, California (AP) — Daredevil Evel Knievel's son, Robbie, says he plans to try to accomplish the feat that put his father in a coma — jump a motorcycle 48.8 metres over the fountains at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. "This has been a dream of mine since I was a kid and would sit and watch the film of my father's jump," Robbie Knievel, 26, said at a news conference announcing his jump scheduled for April 14. Evel Knievel fell off his motorcycle as it hit the ramp when he attempted the jump more than 20 years ago, and was in a coma for most of the next month. The son's attempt will be produced by Showtime Event television and distributed to cable operators on a pay-per-view basis. Robbie Knievel, who began performing motorcycle stunts with his father, already has topped his father's feat of jumping 21 cars. The younger Knievel soared over a 22-car lineup July 30 in Portland, Oregon, holding his hands over his head. His father retired from motorcycle riding exhibitions in 1980, and takes an active hand in his son's career.

Boesky will not get a dome for his home

MOUNT KISCO, New York (AP) — Ivan Boesky will have to return to a home without a dome when he is released from prison after doing time for insider trading. Boesky paid a record \$100-million fine in 1986 to settle Federal Securities and Exchange Commission charges of insider stock trading. He is serving a three-year term after pleading guilty in April 1987 to a federal conspiracy charge, and will be eligible for parole in March. His wife, Seema, wanted to cap their 17-room Georgian mansion in Mount Kisco with a dome similar to the one atop Thomas Jefferson's Monticello home in Charlottesville, Virginia. Boesky needed special permission from the board because her plans would have added a third floor to the house, which is at the centre of a 76-acre (31-hectare) estate called Northview. North castle zoning law limits buildings to two-and-a-half stories.

Tragedies spur Christmas calls for compassion

By Jocelyn Noveck

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The earthquake in Armenia, a plane crash in Britain and the plague of AIDS were the focus of Christmas messages Sunday, as world and spiritual leaders called for compassion for those whose holidays have been shattered by tragedy.

Driving rain and the Palestinian uprising dissuaded crowds of tourists from celebrating the holiday in Bethlehem, the hill-top town where Christ was born. Several hundred pilgrims chanted mass in the Church of the Nativity while Israeli soldiers chased stone-throwing protesters in streets of the town.

"We are excited to be here, to see the places we have read about from childhood through Sunday school and Bible stu-

dies," said Charles W. Fleming, director of the Shiloh Baptist Church senior choir in Washington.

Pope John Paul II set a tone of compassion for the holiday when he offered his Christmas wish: "That 'science and love' would find a cure for the deadly scourge of AIDS."

Speaking to about 70,000 people packed into St. Peter's Square, the pontiff also appealed for help for survivors of the earthquake that rocked Soviet Armenia earlier this month, killing an estimated 55,000 people.

In Armenia, President-elect George Bush's son, John, and grandson, George, toured the disaster area and then went room-to-room at a hospital, passing out candy bars and games to children injured in the quake.

Queen Elizabeth II took the unprecedented step of updating her annual televised Christmas message with a radio message comforting those affected by three recent tragedies: the crash of Pan Am flight 103, the Soviet quake, and a train crash in London earlier this month.

"Our hearts and prayers go out to those who have been injured and bereaved and it is my hope that the eternal message of Christmas will bring some comfort in the hour of sadness," the queen said.

She and 25 other members of the royal family later attended Christmas services at the small church on her Sandringham estate.

In Lockerbie, where the Pan Am jet crashed, Christmas services were tinged with grief as relatives of the dead and soldiers still muddy from scar-

ching the wreckage joined townspeople in holiday prayers.

"Father, if you're the God of love why did you let this happen?" asked the Rev. Maurice Taylor at the town's Holy Trinity Catholic Church.

In his Christmas sermon, Archbishop of Canterbury Robert Runcie said the string of tragedies had a positive side: "A new surge of generosity, new signs of a readiness to give and receive, a new touching of the hearts of men and women towards those whose world they share."

Iranian Parliament Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani and Prime Minister Hussein Mussavi issued separate Christmas greetings Sunday to Christians outside Iran and to about 400,000 inside Iran.

"Best wishes to all religious

people of the world, especially our Christian countrymen on the blessed birthday of the great prophet Christ," Rafsanjani said.

In South Africa, the family of Nelson Mandela made a brief visit to the jailed black leader, who spent his 27th consecutive Christmas in prison.

In West Germany, Joseph Werner of Setauket, Long Island, spent Christmas eve in a solitary vigil on the western side of the Berlin Wall, distributing small black paper flags in what he said was a protest against the forced division of many German families.

Not all celebrations were subdued. In Wales, 72-year-old Ted Nash raised a glass to herald the birth of his third great-granddaughter to be born on Christmas day.